Nature, self, and being in the world:
Revealing a flourishing ethics in landscape architecture through poignant landscape experiences

LACF Grant 2020 Summary Report
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Project Abstract

Landscapes are the settings for life experiences. These experiences range from the most mundane to the most poignant. Landscape architects shape landscapes, but an issue lies in the praxis of the profession. Although landscape is not synonymous with nature, landscape is inseparable from the notion of nature. No matter how nature is culturally or historically constructed, it always carries an existential story of a human-world relationship that is performed through life experiences. When an enigmatic natural world was abandoned for the objectivity of biology and space, the worldview of landscape also split into binary narratives of human versus nature, sacred versus profane, poetic versus practical. Contemporary landscape architecture and environmental ethics, as part of contemporary society, are also enmeshed in these binary narratives. The expansion of secularism and nondualist cosmologies such as Daoism and Indigenous teachings into the Western world has made polarised moral judgements, which are loosely based on past Christian narratives, paradoxical and unsupportive towards resolving contemporary social and ecological disputes. Therefore, this project adopts 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.

The 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 to 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.

Cover image: Gray Bridge and Trees (Location: Gablenz, Germany), by Martin Damboldt from Pexels.com; this image was rated as most "poignant" among 20 landscape images in the online survey created for this research.

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This document is a summary report of my doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change at York University, to be officially completed in the early part of 2021. Here, I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have supported me and played important roles in the progress of this project:

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Project Summary

My research project is about reflection and reflexivity—for the landscape architecture profession, for the individual, and for collective humanity. As evident in our current world affairs, our world is going through a collective social and environmental crisis. In recent years, the profession of landscape architecture has claimed that landscape architecture can be a leading force in addressing monumental social and ecological issues, and assist in building a more sustainable and equitable world (LAF n.d.; Weller 2016). However, as much as landscape architecture can shape physical and social landscapes, our social environment, which is built upon our collective histories, also shapes landscape architecture. My research recognises that our lives, our collective histories, and our world, as we perceive it, are relational and interpretative. Therefore, to address our social and environmental crisis, and for landscape architecture to succeed in building a sustainable and equitable world, we need to examine the roots of our social problems: that is, the parts of our collective humanity that disregards the world's interconnectedness; the parts of our collective humanity that denies our human limitedness; and the parts of collective humanity that remains ignorant to how our shared stories of the world shape how we relate to "nature," including the nature of ourselves and of each other.

First, I present an epistemological framework of human existence: 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 can put doubts on our non-linguistic way of being and override our abilities to access this intuitive knowingness. Whatever comes out of the balance becomes knowledge and wisdom at personal and collective levels, consciously and unconsciously. This mixture of knowledge and wisdom becomes the foundation to making ethical (or non-ethical) actions in the world. However, since the 17th century, in which Descartes' phrase "I think, therefore I am" took dominance, the Western world has operated predominately from a mind-body dualism that overlooks wisdom and intuition, and instead, favours binary-thinking and empiricism. Binary-thinking also prevails in the discourse of ethics, since most ethical arguments are usually based on judgements of "good" or "bad" actions.

However, the in-between (of language and intuition, knowledge and wisdom, individuality and collectivity, as well as consciousness and unconsciousness) is where the "truth" of our existential Beingness resides. In this research, "poignant landscapes" are phenomenal examples of liminal experiences where gateways exist to the belongingness that a person can feel when they are aware of the interconnectedness of the world. Similarly, "flourishing" is considered an approach to ethics that liberates ethical choice-making beyond binary-thinking

and judgementalism. An ethic of flourishing is relational and non-teleological (Cuomo 1998). Therefore, there are no right or wrong answers; we just ask ourselves: How can I flourish? How can we flourish? What is a flourishing society (Cafaro 2001)? And what is flourishing landscape architecture?

If landscape architecture is to be appreciated as a process of place-making, then landscape architecture is also an archetypal process of creating belongingness in our interconnected world. Poignant landscapes, ideally, would also be parts of a landscape architect's repertoire of understanding in making landscapes and flourishing environments. Therefore, my research focus was to understand how poignant landscape experiences could influence landscape architects' participation in the world through an ethic of flourishing. The mediator between the two concepts—a poignant experience and an ethic of flourishing in practice—was experiential awareness: self-awareness of the connectivity of individuals with society, humanity, and the greater universe. Self-awareness is interpretative and exists in a loop because we are only aware of what we are aware of until we see things in another way. Accordingly, my project aimed to create personal reflection through storytelling, at the same time, with collective reflection through the hermeneutic disruption of pre-existing (an often binary) meanings established in these stories and interpretations of the world.

I explored the profession of landscape architecture's interpretations through three means: 1) From the perspective of the professional body, in respect to ethics through documents published by landscape architecture associations and organisations across North America; 2) From the perspective of landscape architects in general, regarding poignant landscapes and values in landscape architecture through an anonymous and voluntary online survey; and 3) From the perspective of "flourishing" landscape architects, regarding poignant landscapes and values in landscape architecture through semi-structured interviews. The survey received 53 responses, and 14 landscape architects agreed to be interviewed. These landscape architects include 13 individuals from Canada (all of whom waived their anonymity) and one (anonymous) individual from the United States. Note here that flourishing landscape architects are meant to be able to make autonomous choices in work despite social and political limitations that need navigating. Therefore, according to existing social hierarchies, flourishing landscape architects are usually also individuals with positions of relative seniority; but in the ideal sense, seniority should not be a factor to flourishing. (See Appendices A, B, and C for the collected data and analysis of each of the research methods used.)

One major research finding is the discrepancy of interpretations for landscapes and landscape architecture between the professional body, the collective, and the individual. The "professional body," through codes, mandates, and assertions, rely on regulations, directives, and procedures (either legally or suggestively presumed on members) to create structure. The "collective," as interpreted through the survey responses, are more oriented towards the status quo, partially open to improving the profession, but at the same time, doubtful of the

possibilities. The "individual," through the interviews and my own reflexivity of my relationship with the social narratives of nature, culture, and landscape architecture, finds that poignancy and flourishing are dependent on how we each strive to interpret the world and our experiences in productive and empathetic ways. Therefore, to create a more poignant world of belongingness where people and environments can flourish, individual interpretations need to be nurtured and brought into the collective consciousness so that binary-thinking and rigid boundaries between (professional) identities and disciplines can be crossed.

Through a writing style that was part dialogue, part literature review, and part autoethnography, my project weaved knowledge and wisdom together with experience and storytelling, proving that "being human" is beyond boundaries. Our first thoughts about a word, a notion, a group of people, and maybe even every individual in the world, including ourselves, are usually much too simplified. 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. Because we tend to compact the world into slots of language, disciplines, and identities, we lose a lot of the *magic* and *refuge* that the world has to offer, rendering a world and a humanity that is scarce, unsafe, and impersonal.

But landscapes can exist beyond language (Edensor 2010). And landscapes can help us feel belonging despite our social narratives. These are reasons to why landscape architecture is special. But landscape architecture can only let landscapes do their "work" (or in other words, *work their magic*) when we recognise that our narratives of the world are often getting in the way. These narratives exist in our minds, through our social and historical knowledge, and by means of our institutional structures, whether they are landscape architecture related or not. Therefore, my conclusion to the research returns back to reflexivity. Poignant landscapes are based on the belief that poignant experiences in landscapes exist and matter. And flourishing is a reciprocal phenomenon—an individual flourishes in a flourishing environment; a flourishing environment flourishes with individuals who flourish. For these reasons, we all play a part in the flourishing of the world and in making the world poignant.

Chapter Summaries

The following are summaries of each of the chapters in my dissertation.

1. Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I explain the rationale for the project and the research design. Phenomenology (i.e. the study of experience) and hermeneutics (i.e. the study of interpretation) were the main methodologies used. Pertinent to understanding experience and awareness is the use of language. Not only are words interpretative, words can also "enliven" or "deaden" what we are speaking about, including our thoughts about landscapes, nature, ourselves, and the world around us (Abram 1997; Fisher 2013). Although "bias" is often portrayed as something to avoid in research, hermeneutics informs us that understanding is based on pre-established biases. To create new areas of understanding, either as an individual or as a collective, these biases need to go through a process of "disturbance" (Gadamer [1960] 2004). I also suggest in the introduction that landscape architecture, for the most part, has not engaged theoretically or in practice with an ontological philosophy. That is, if landscape architecture is about place-making, then human anthropology, psychology, and spirituality are foundational to the discipline. Therefore, I suggest that the idea of a landscape architect not only manifests in the world as a real-life professional, "the landscape architect" also exists as an archetype in our "collective unconscious" (Jung 1968) as a way to relate to the social and ecological world in the modern-day context.

2. The Origins of a Personal Worldview: A Short Memoir

One of the major themes in the research is the interconnectedness between the individual and the collective. This relationship exists in society's conscious realm, but also in the unconscious realm, creating personal and collective worldviews, biases, traditions, and traumas. Therefore, 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. Since this was the last chapter that was added into the paper, I realised near the end of my research that a major piece of the puzzle that I was searching for was "me" all along. My story was just as crucial as the stories I had collected from research participants because the data that called out to me as study themes in my research finally found a place to "ground" themselves (i.e., through me and my life). Therefore, I cannot ignore my interpretations of the world as much as I cannot ignore that "I" am also relational and exist because of the connections between me and landscapes, nature, and other people.

3. The Idea of Nature: The Perpetual Dilemma of Nature-Culture

In Chapter 3, I turn to 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 our discourse about landscapes. For instance, participants used language that separated the nature shaped by nature and the nature shaped by humans. Understandably, this pattern goes beyond landscape architecture and is a discursive thought pattern of the modern human mind. Stereotypes of nature such as the "wilderness," the "countryside," and the "city" create categorizations of landscapes and nature in ways that encourage binary thinking. 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. The fascination for human history for some participants can then be interpreted as an appeal to discover the nature of human beings and how we have historically tried to create the feeling of home on Earth. 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.

4. Poignant Experiences:

Finding Belongingness in Profound Encounters and in the Everyday

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 themself and the nature-culture dynamic, I argue that experience should be a balanced act of participatory "witnessing" (Amir 2012) 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.

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

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 a participant 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 (Cuomo 1998; 1999; Hoagland 1999), I explored how landscape architects navigate between their own personal ethics and institutional ethics established by the professional body and existing socio-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 still wavers over its identity and worthiness in comparison to allied disciplines (Weller 2016), which I would argue limits landscape architecture's unique role as a sacred place-making profession. In tandem, I wonder about my ambivalent position within the profession and explore how identity and name status can no longer be the sustaining force for my own life's flourishing. I bring these reflexive questions to the reader: Can we feel our commonality in the world if we remain fully identified with our roles in a sub-group? And can we care for the world's common grounds if we do not feel our world's commonality?

6. Shifting Paradigms: Expanding Horizons in Landscape Architecture

Some participants expressed that landscape architecture is simply a part of a bigger team. But inn parallel, the world is the common ground where all of humanity exists (often reluctantly) as a mega-team. To make changes to this common ground, 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 (Roe 2012). 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 (Fisher 2019). Instead of being "radically" polarized, we need to be doing the total opposite—to radically find the commonality of being in the world.

7. Conclusion

In the concluding chapter, I wrap up the discussion with the lessons that had I learned through my research, the recommendations that I have for the landscape architecture profession, and my thoughts about where we stand as "landscape architects" (professionally or archetypically) in the year 2020. I learned that in order for me to flourish, and to contribute in the flourishing of the world, I needed to own my voice and story, as well as let my guard down against "disturbances" so that I can open up to new areas of understanding. The same lessons can be applied to the collective, especially in institutions, where often professional identities and bodies of knowledge create boundaries defensively against less conventional ways of knowing and being in the world. Therefore, I recommend a consistent practice of self-awareness at the individual level and the implementation of phenomenology and non-binary (non-judgemental or reflexive) ethics in landscape architecture education. Landscape architecture associations can also assist in providing a flourishing environment for landscape architects by helping members become more secure *as human beings* (e.g. areas of self-worth, courage, and empathy) rather than focussing on prescribed assets as a professional.

The year 2020 has been a major year for reflection. While the saying goes that we need to learn from history, as human beings, we have proven that we have not yet learned all the lessons from our past. And the reason, I argue, is that reflection is a mirror. The lesson is embedded in a single moment of "what is." We must go through a process of acknowledging exactly where we are now: our thoughts, our feelings, our hopes, and our despairs. That is, in order to flourish holistically, we need to consider all that is dreadful, all that is mundane, and all that is poignant in our individual and collective lives.

Key Messages and Recommendations

As my research is meant to be philosophical and contemplative, some landscape architects may find the results difficult to apply to their life or work. Therefore, in this section, I summarise the key messages and recommendations that I and/or research participants have addressed in the study. Each of these points addresses an area of landscape architecture that can be reflected upon individually and collectively. Depending on the reader's role in landscape architecture, these recommendations can either be considered as areas for personal growth or brought into the professional context through relationships with co-workers, processes in landscape architecture projects, or initiatives via landscape architecture associations.

1. Nature was one of the most important concepts relayed in the comments by landscape architect participants. However, there is little consensus over what is nature. The idea of nature is often stereotyped or simplified in everyday discourse. The oversimplification of the world's complexity, including nature and human nature, creates an impression of the world as a mechanical problem that can be solved through binary-thinking, and if not, must be kept in its status quo structures. The profession of landscape architecture needs to reflect over where it has oversimplified concepts of nature, culture, and everything in between.

2. Innovation and creativity often arise out of a "third" space (e.g. ecotones and liminal zones). Therefore, crossing boundaries in the transdisciplinary sense is necessary for shifting paradigms. However, professional bodies often create more rigid boundaries by focussing on developing professional identities, separating disciplines of knowledge, and establishing regulations. More reflection can also be done in landscape architecture to see where institutional structures and professional boundaries continue to hinder transdisciplinary collaboration and personal growth.

3. Experiential education, towards ecological or social processes, was considered one of the best ways to learn about landscapes because natural and social processes are learned through awareness, personal reflection, and making mistakes. Landscape architecture education and continuing education can focus more on experiential ways of learning.

4. Creating a genuine sense of community is important for individual flourishing as well as collective flourishing, but community is much more than social or professional gatherings, which are what professional associations offer predominantly at this time. Authentic community is where people can share their differences without judgement and reveal their struggles in an empathetic environment. More can be done in this area in landscape architecture to support individual landscape architects.

5. Finding a common ground is necessary in order to see collective flourishing, whether the common ground is a landscape, a landscape architecture project, the health of the Earth, or human worthiness. But finding a common ground is dependent on accepting everyone's differences. Therefore, having a non-judgemental and empathic environment, once again, is very important.

6. Courage, confidence, and integrity were listed as important traits to becoming a flourishing landscape architect because one needs to stand up for one's personal ethics towards what is good for the public when challenges arise. But hegemonic structures such as social and institutional hierarchy as well as the prioritization of economic development over other forms of social wellbeing often leads to resignation and defeatist attitudes. Therefore, landscape architecture also needs to look into dismantling the power that social structures have over an individual's sense of worthiness to speak their truth.

7. Many participants considered landscape architecture their "life calling" and believed that a core essence to the profession is a sense of humanitarianism. Therefore, learning to listen well and being able to empathise with others are foundational traits important to landscape architecture. In order to listen well and empathise with others, one also has to value themself. Therefore, self-compassion is also an area that landscape architects can develop on.

8. Lastly, how we see the world is based on interpretation. Whether we see value in something, see landscapes as poignant, or see the possibility of creating poignant landscape architecture is based on how we choose to interpret the relationships readily available in the world. Most critically, our interpretations get passed on to the people around us, especially, those of the younger generation. Therefore, how we speak of landscapes, of nature, and of ourselves will become the foundations to what is possible in the world, for the present and for the future. Therefore, I recommend that we all interpret and speak of the world responsibly and inspiringly.

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Appendix A: 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.
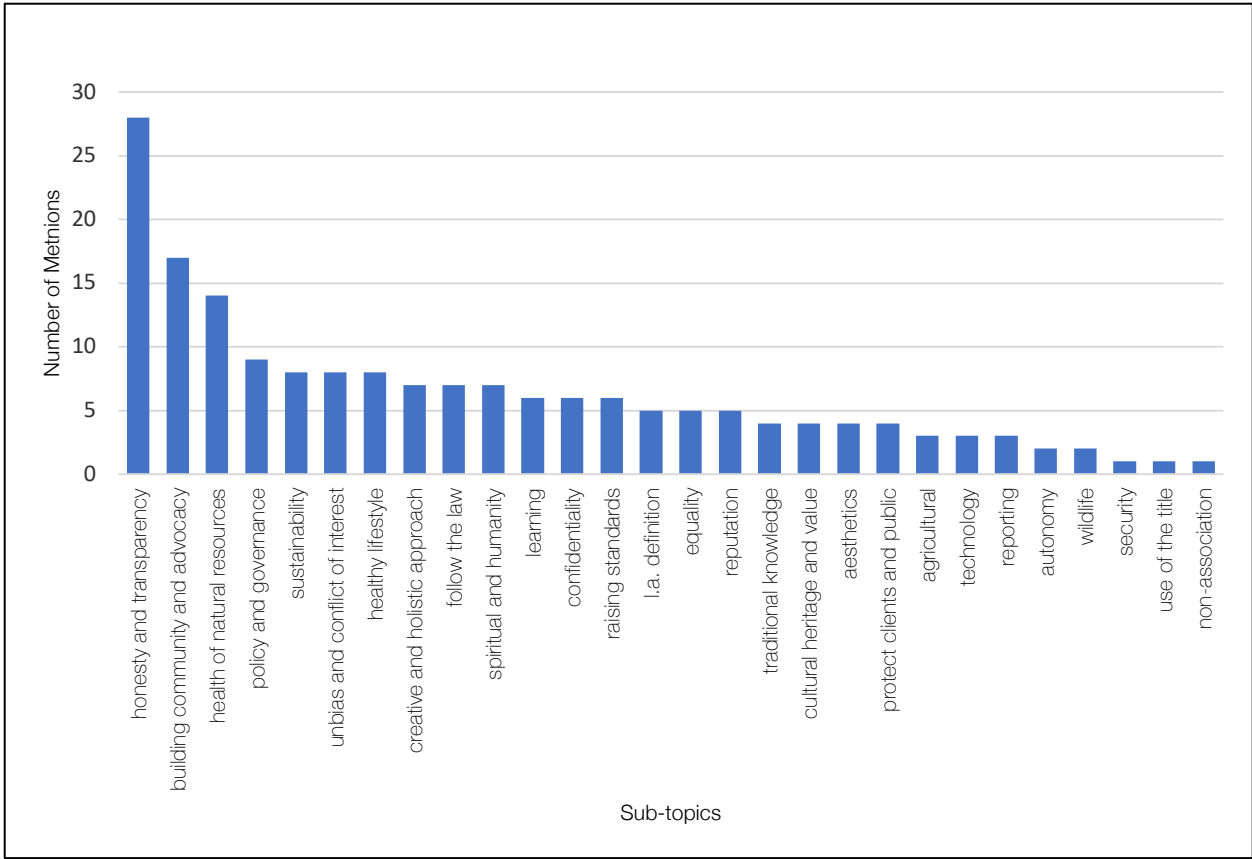
List of Landscape Architecture Documents Reviewed

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

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%

Frequency of Subtopics in Landscape Architecture Documents

Appendix B: 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 [*now known as Inactive*]). I am currently completing a PhD at York University in the Faculty of Environmental Studies [*now part of the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change*]. 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 Result

"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)

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
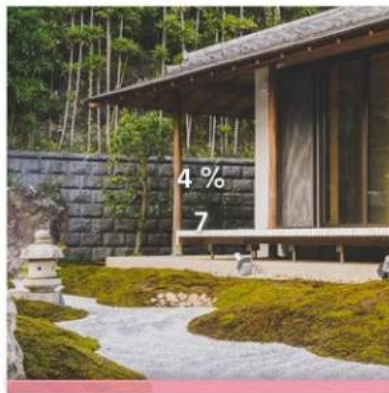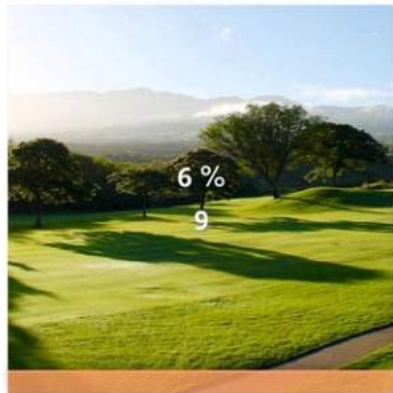
Images and Rankings for Poignant Landscapes in Survey (Phase 1)

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

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 planting *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*	15	3
Van Gogh's painting *Landscape with Ploughed Fields*	15	3
Monet's *Waterlilies*	12	2
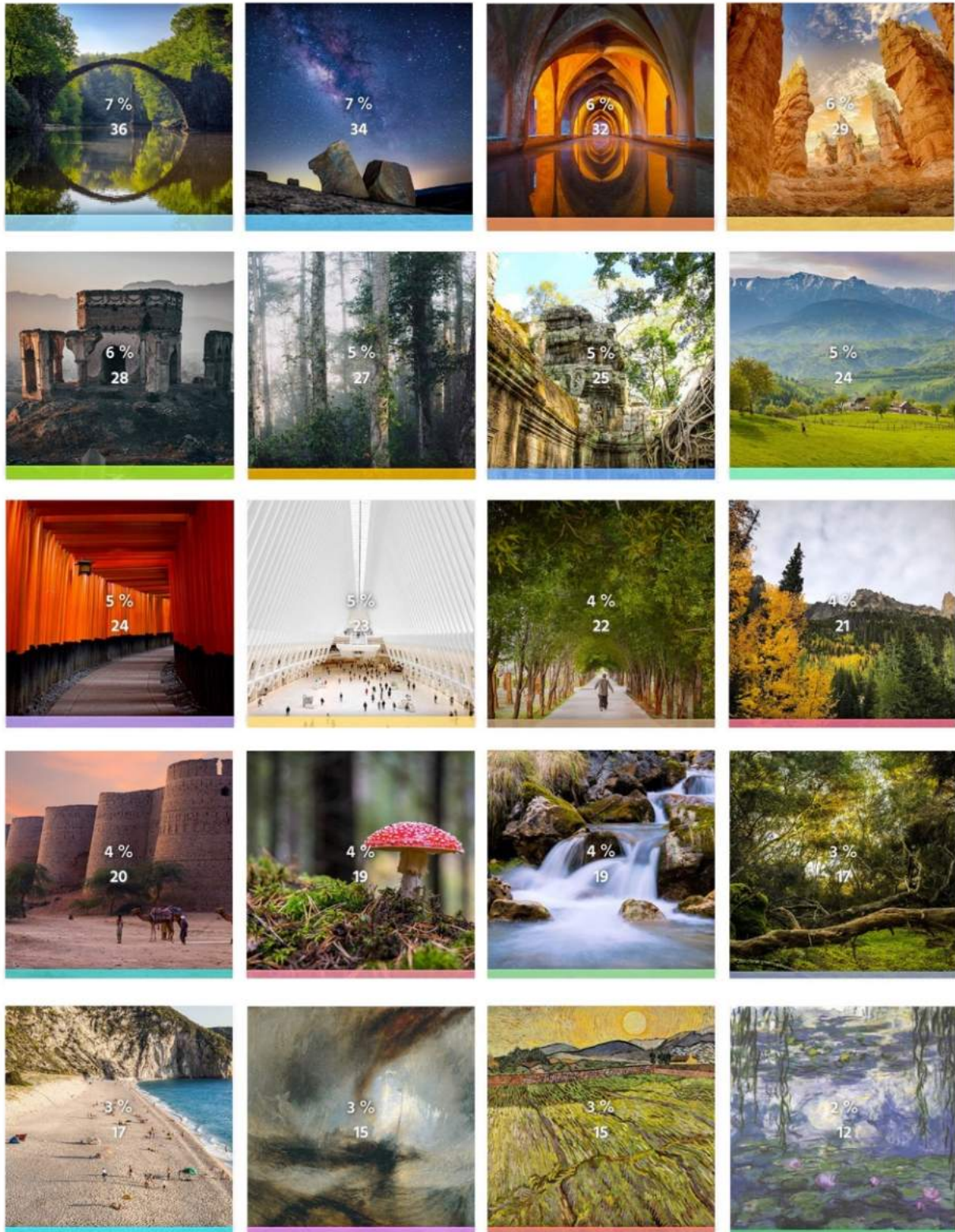
Images and Rankings for Poignant Landscapes in Survey (Phase 2)

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 (e.g. serene, majestic, geometrical, flowing, etc.)
List up to 3. Example: Stonehenge – monumental, sacred, mysterious

- Answers were coded and analysed for their frequency.
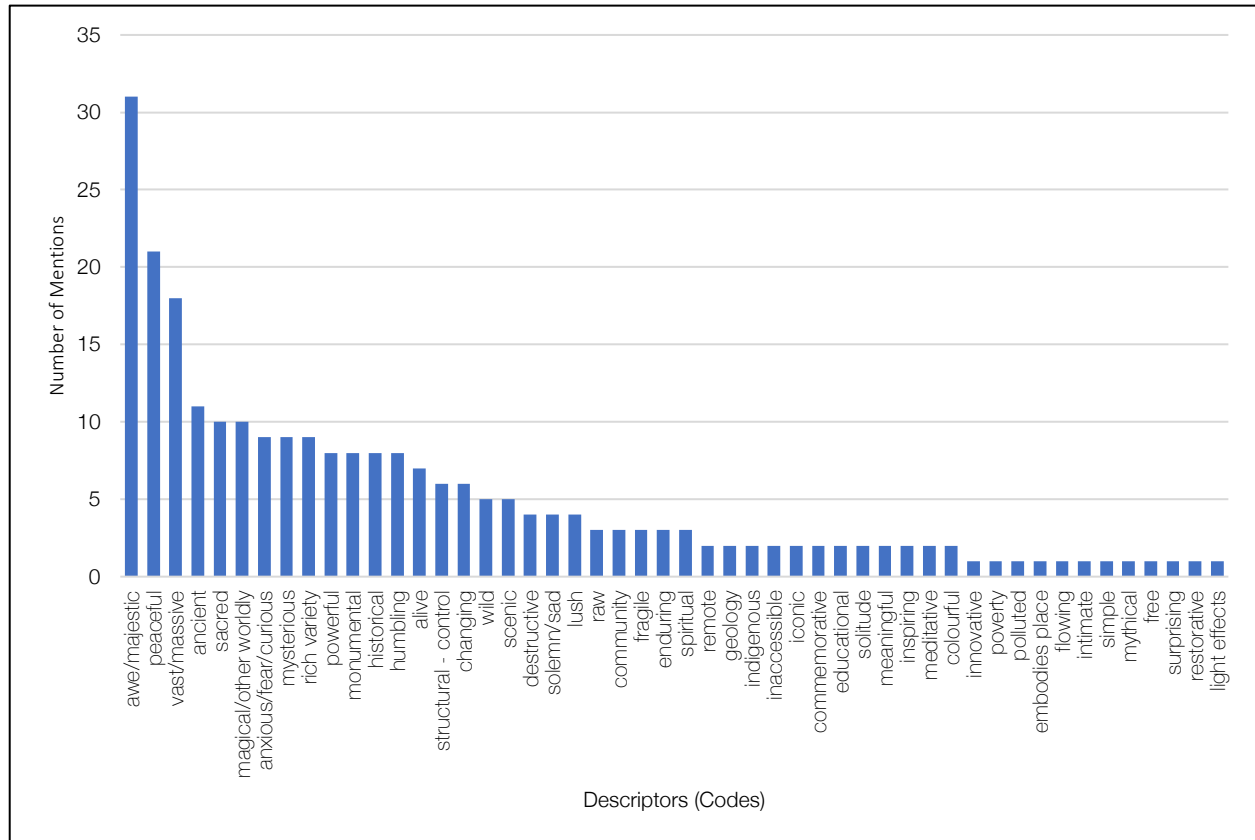
Frequency of Descriptors for "Poignant" Landscapes in Survey

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?

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)

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
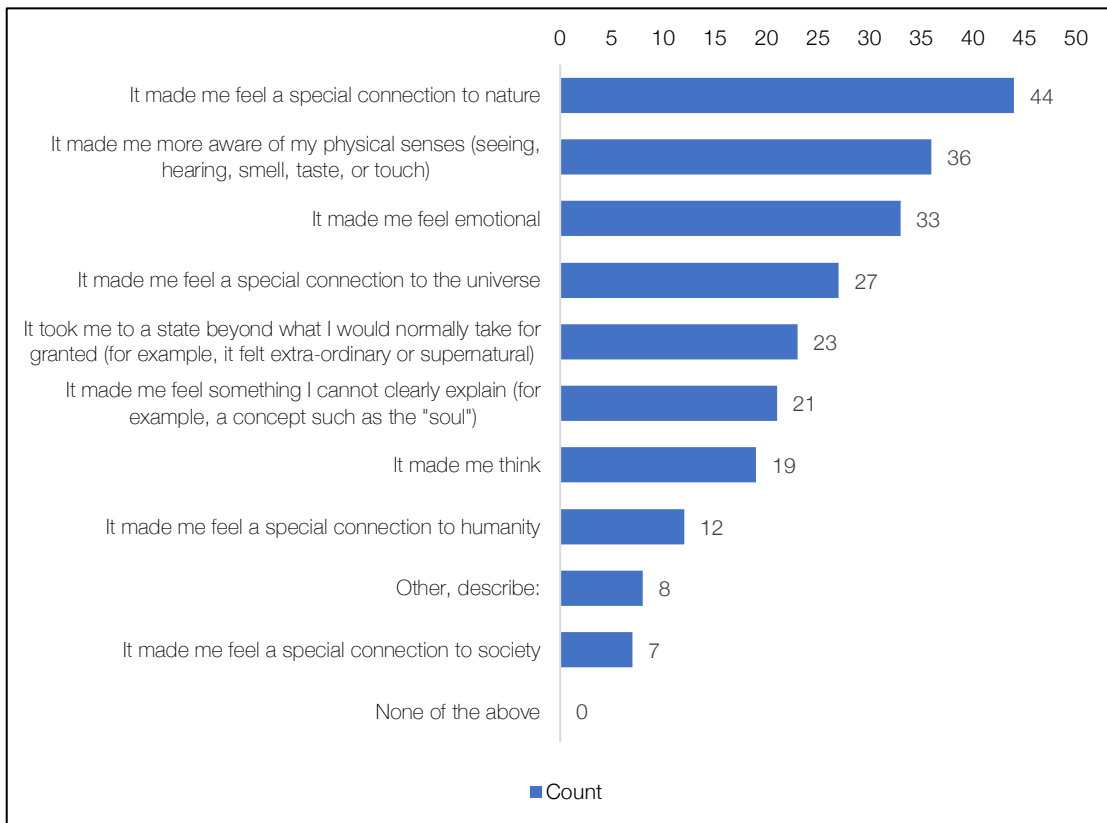
Ranking of How Survey Participants Were Affected by a Poignant Landscape

7. When did this landscape experience occur?

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
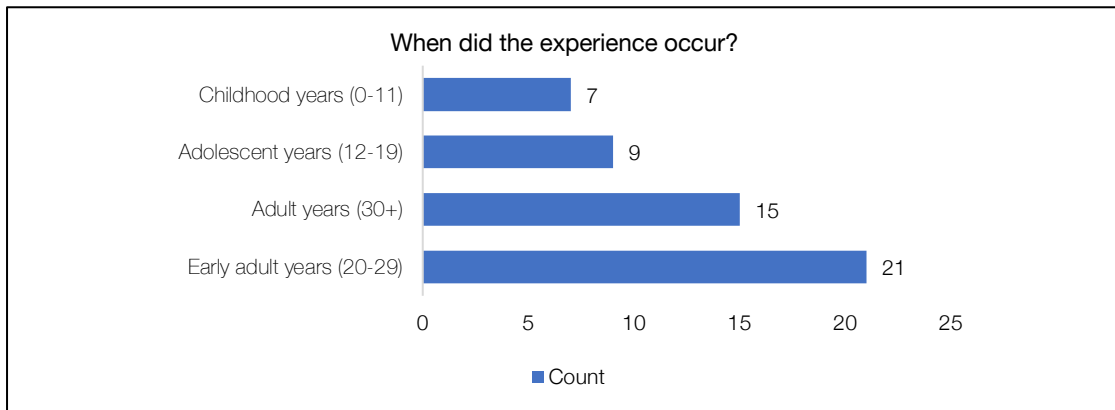
Age When Survey Participants Experienced Their Poignant Landscape

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

Influence of Poignant Landscape Experiences on View of Nature in Survey

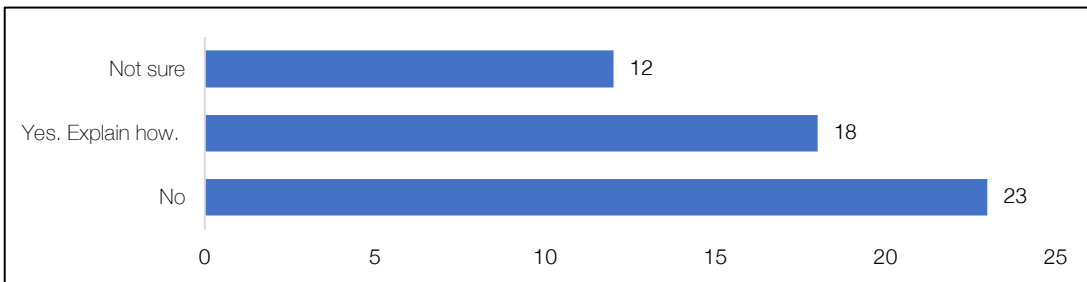| Did the experience affect participant's view (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Yes. Explain how.	29	54
No	18	33
Not sure	6	9
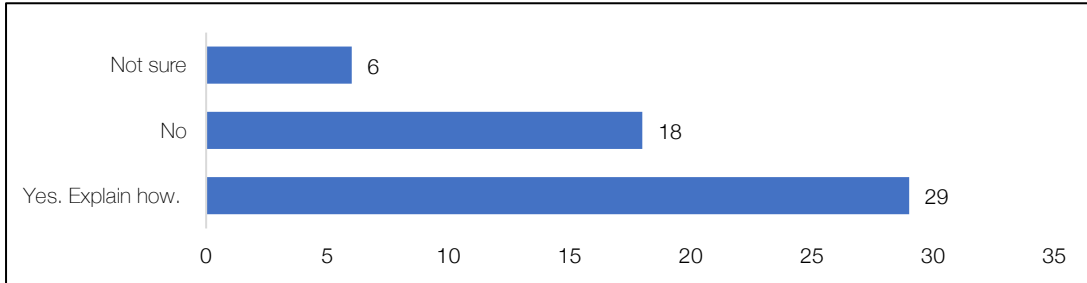
Influence of Poignant Landscape Experiences on View of Nature in Survey

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

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

Influence of Poignant Landscape Experience on View of Landscape in Survey

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

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
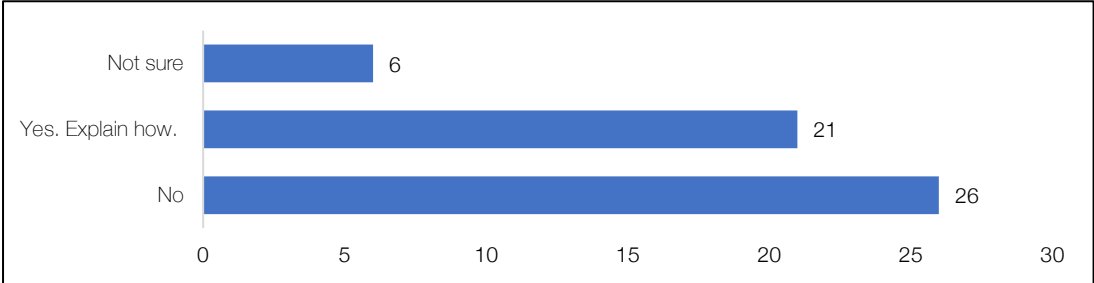
Influence of Poignant Landscape Experience on View of Landscape Architecture in Survey

Answers for Questions 8, 9, and 10 were coded and analysed for their frequency
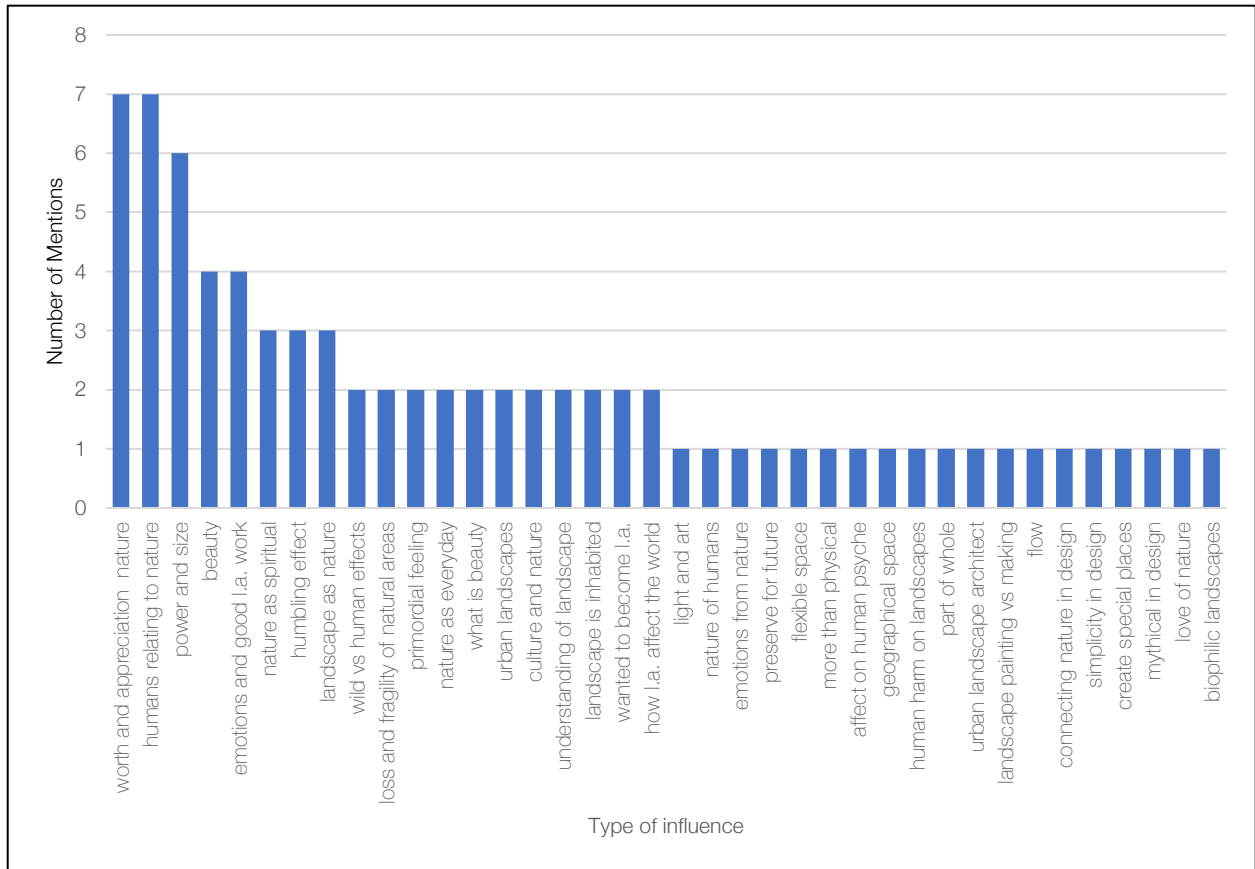
Frequency of Influences Affecting View of Nature, Landscape, Or Landscape Architecture
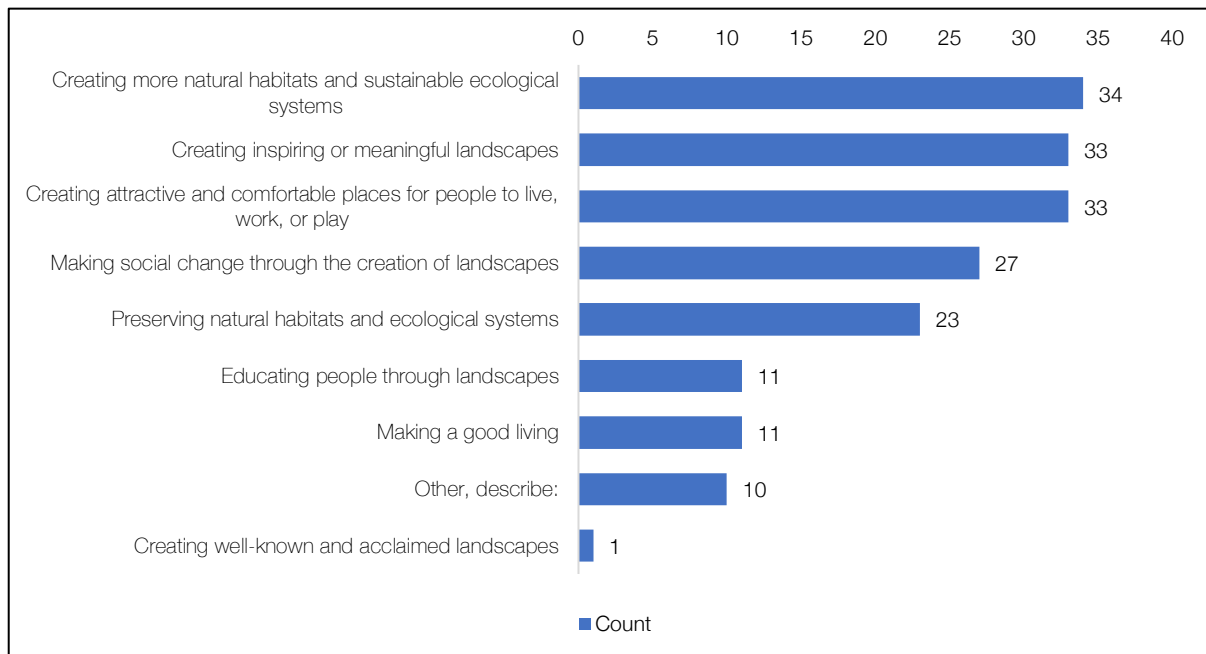
The Role of a Landscape Architect

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 <u>most important</u> for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect? (Choose up to 3)

Goals for A Fulfilling Life as A Landscape Architect from Survey

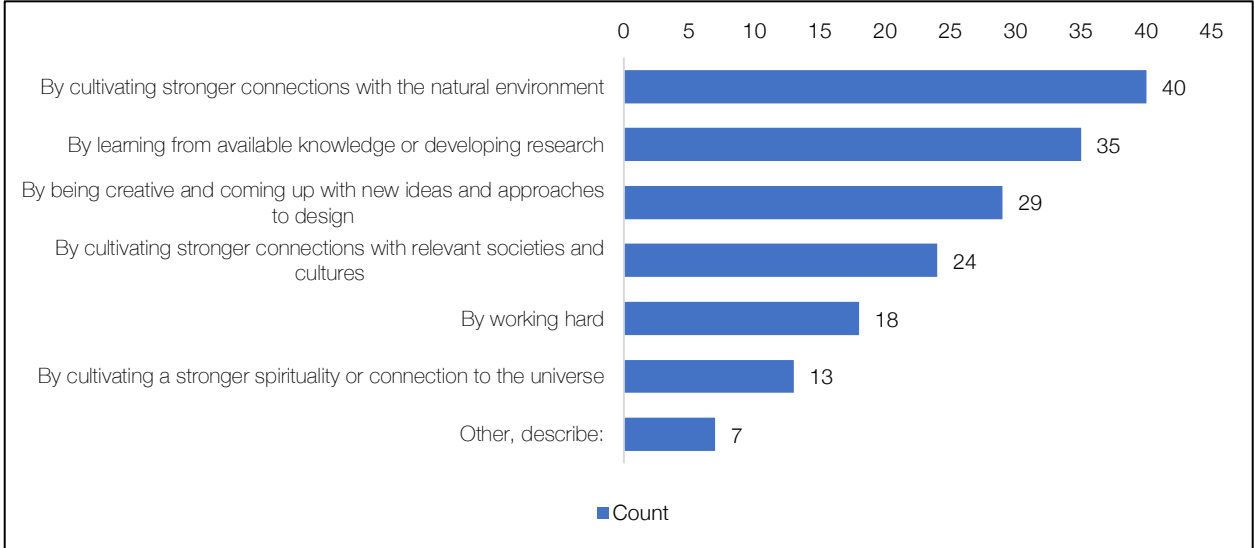| Goals for a fulfilling life as a landscape architect (multiple choice)	Count	Percentage
Creating more natural habitats and sustainable ecological systems	34	18
Creating inspiring or meaningful landscapes	33	17
Creating attractive and comfortable places for people to live, work, or play	33	17
Making 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

Ranking of Goals for a Fulfilling Life as a Landscape Architect from Survey

12. What do you think are the <u>best ways</u> to achieve this fulfilling life as a landscape architect? (Choose up to 3)

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

Ranking of Best Ways to Achieve a Fulfilling Life as a Landscape Architect from Survey

13. Why did you become a landscape architect?
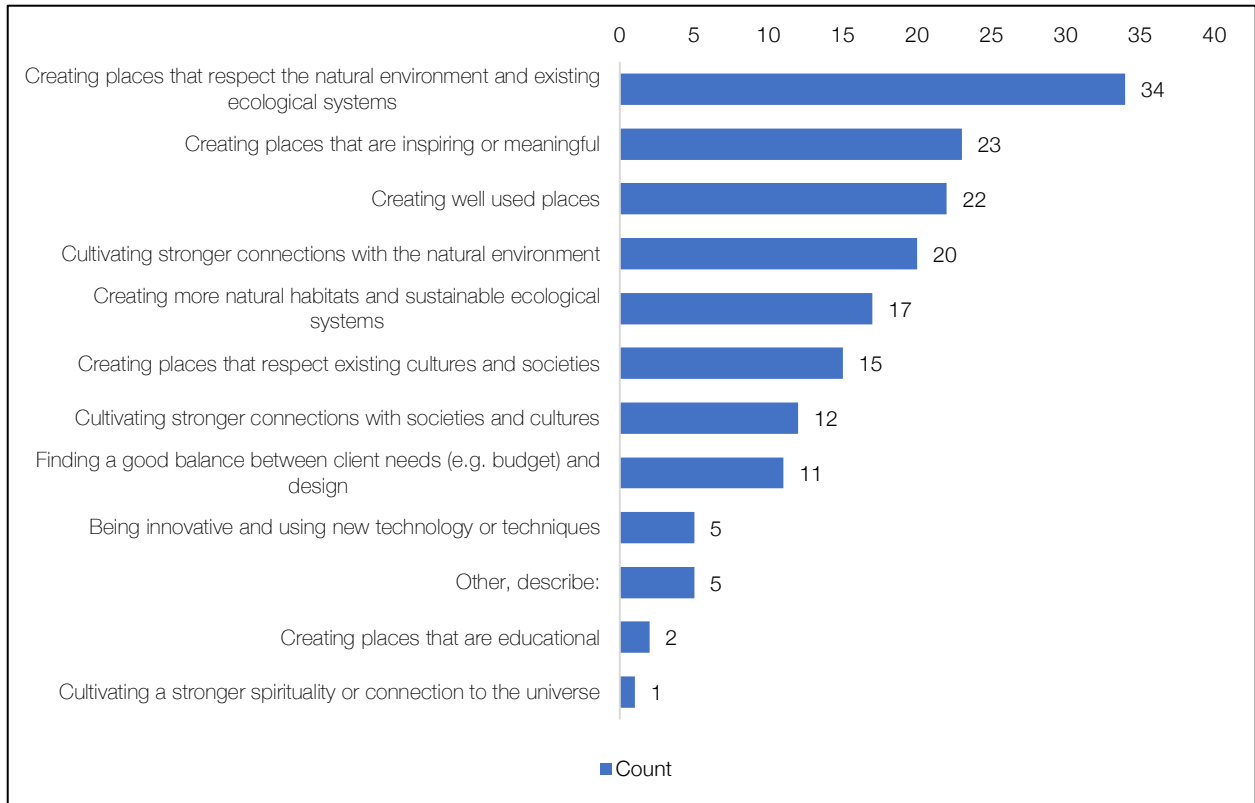- Answers were reviewed non-systematically and compared with interview transcripts.

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 <u>most important</u> to doing good landscape architecture? (Choose up to 3)
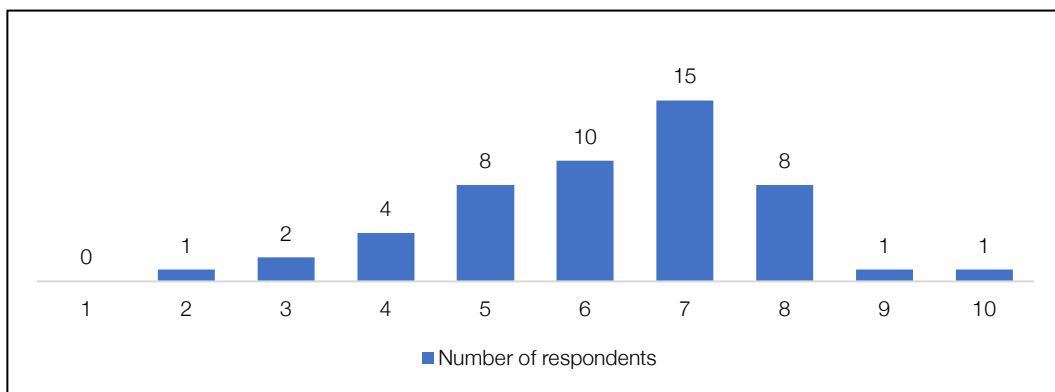
Goals Important to Doing Good Landscape Architecture from Survey

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

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)

Rating of Landscape Architecture Profession in Accordance to Goals Selected as Important to Doing Good Landscape Architecture in Survey
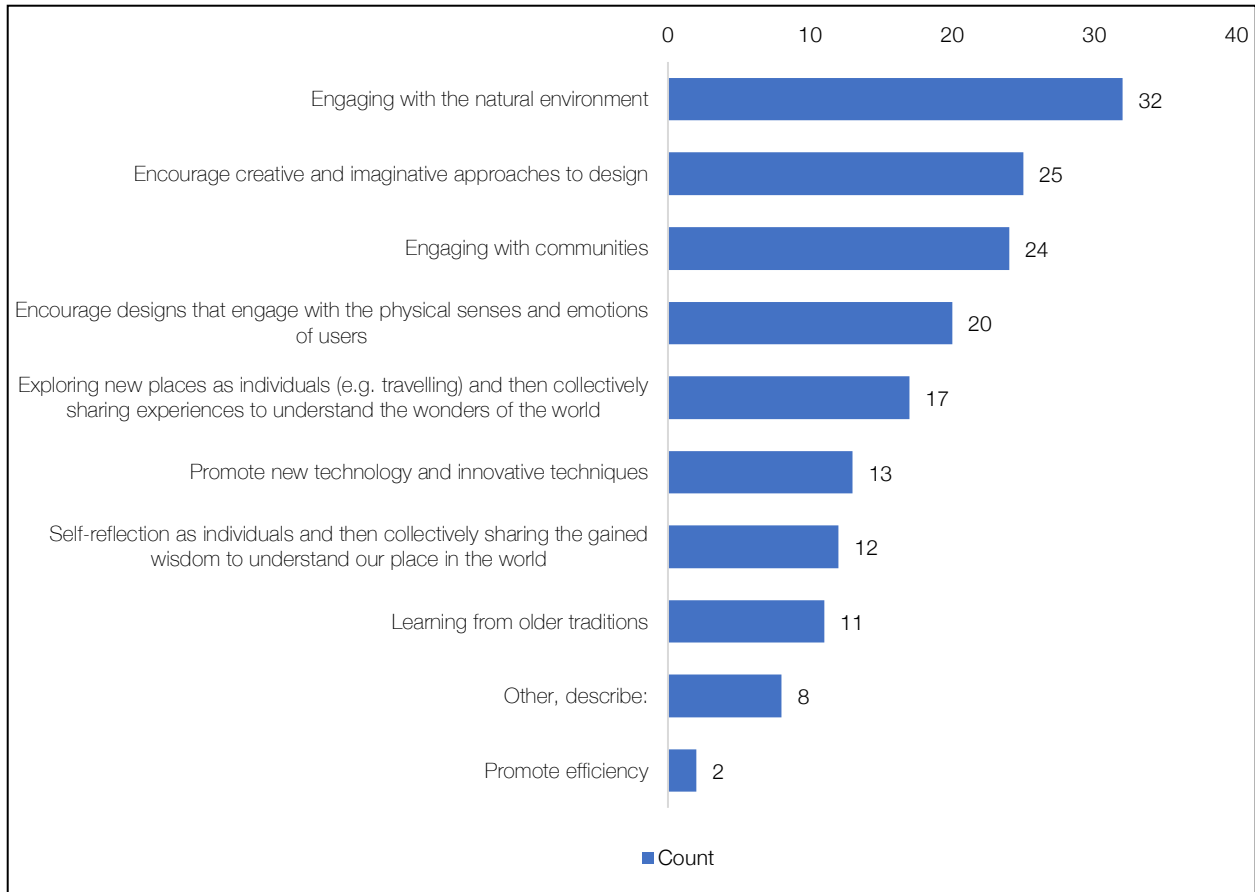
Optional comment for your rating above:

- 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)

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

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)
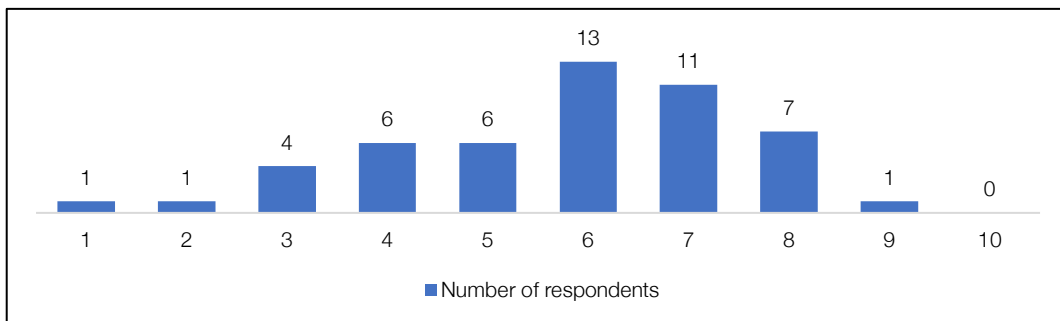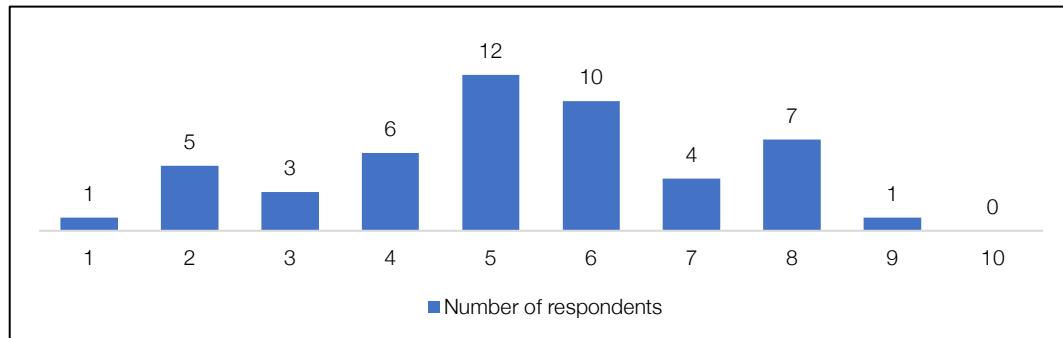

Rating of Landscape Architecture Profession in Accordance to Aspirations for Good Landscape Architecture from Survey

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)

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)
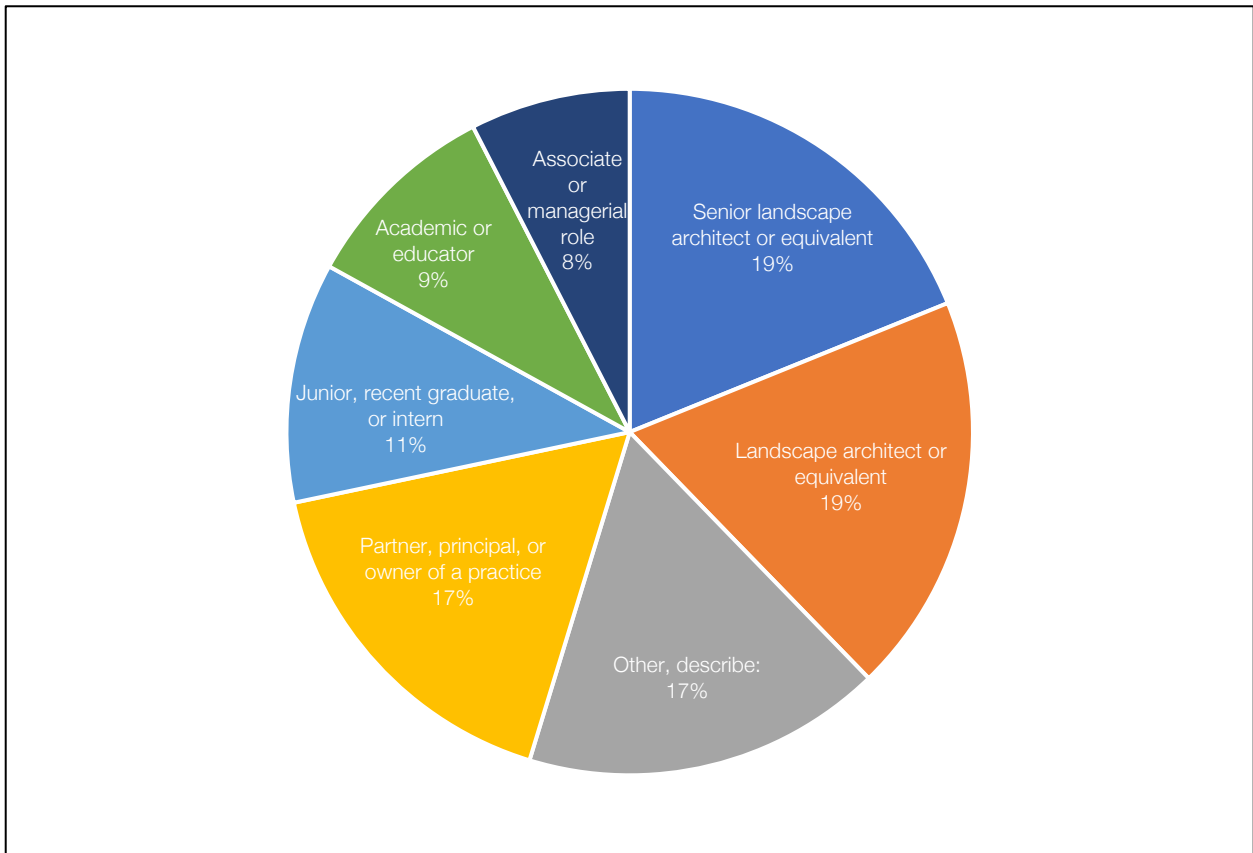
- Answers were reviewed non-systematically.

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?

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

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)

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
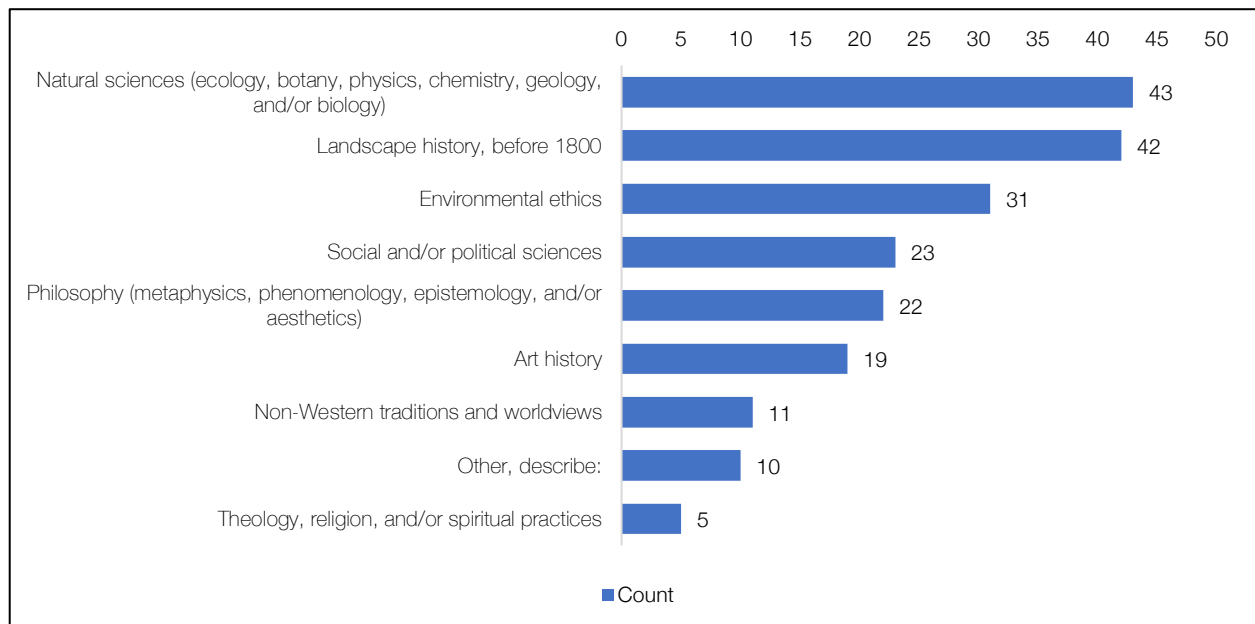
Ranking of Topics Part of Landscape Architecture Training from Survey

18. What gender do you identify with?

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
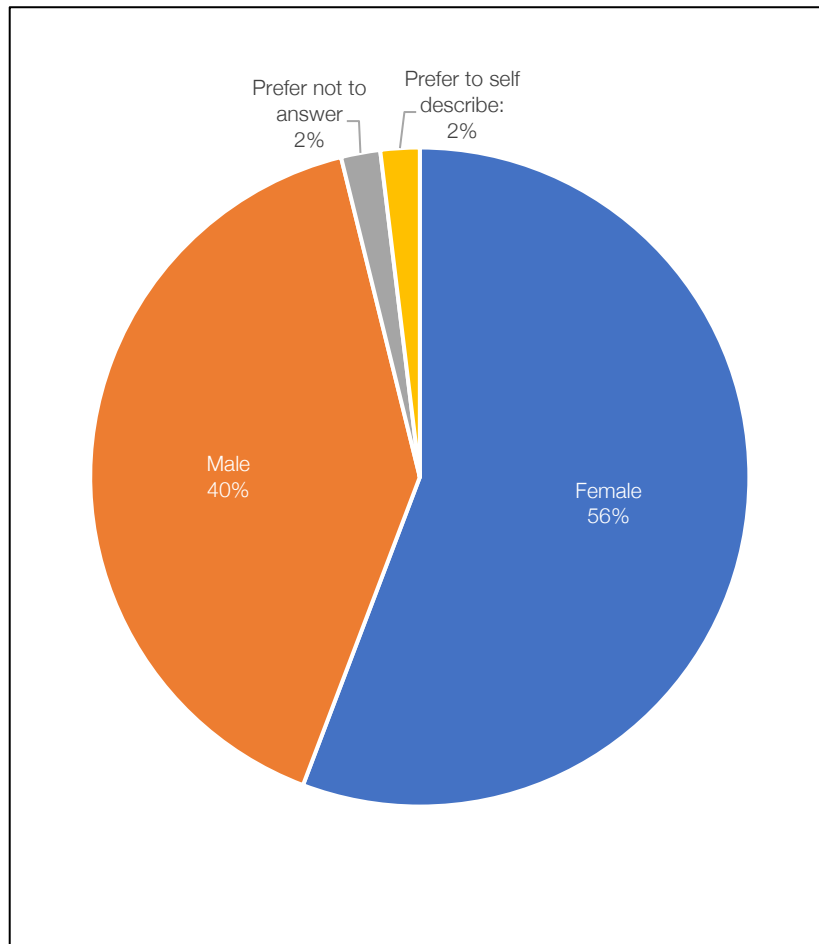
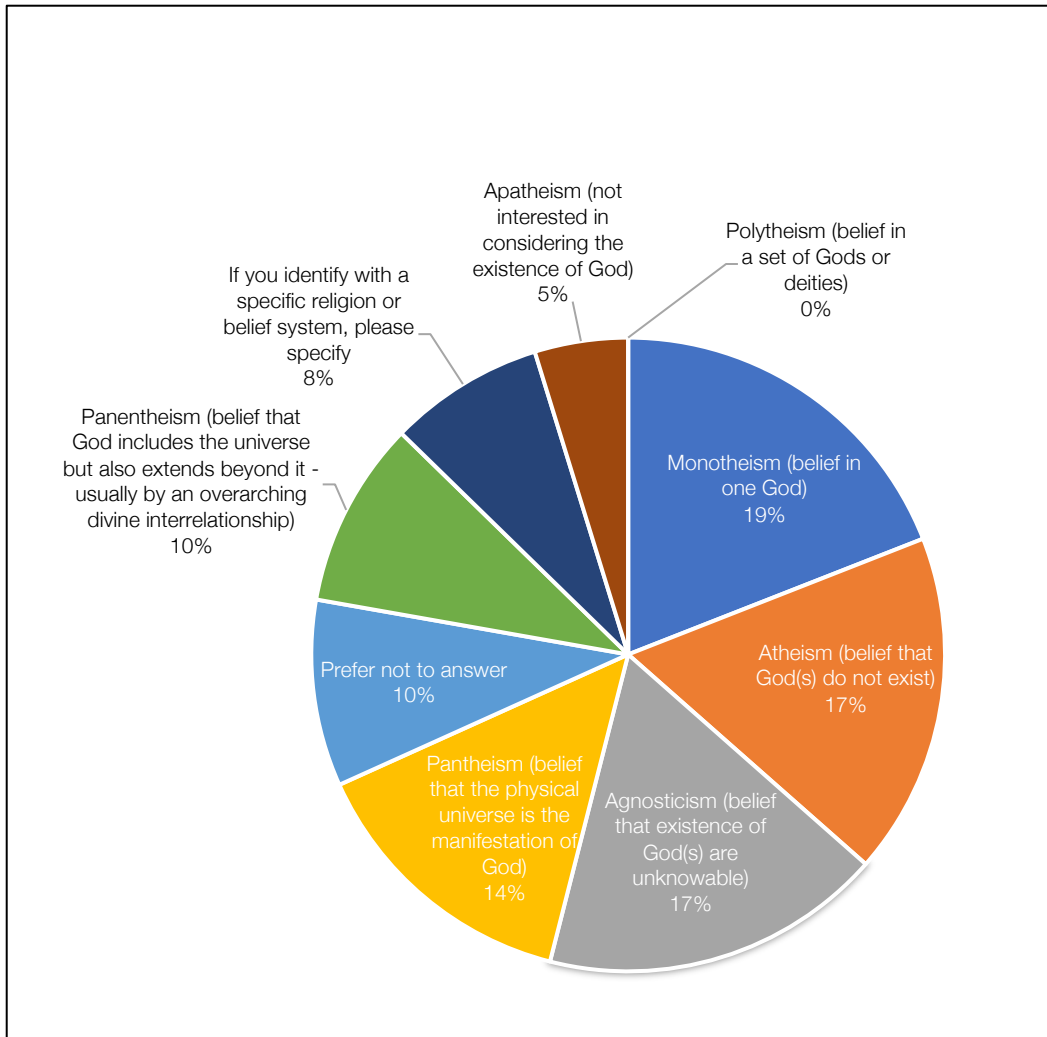**Gender Distribution of Survey Participants**

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)

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

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 C: 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
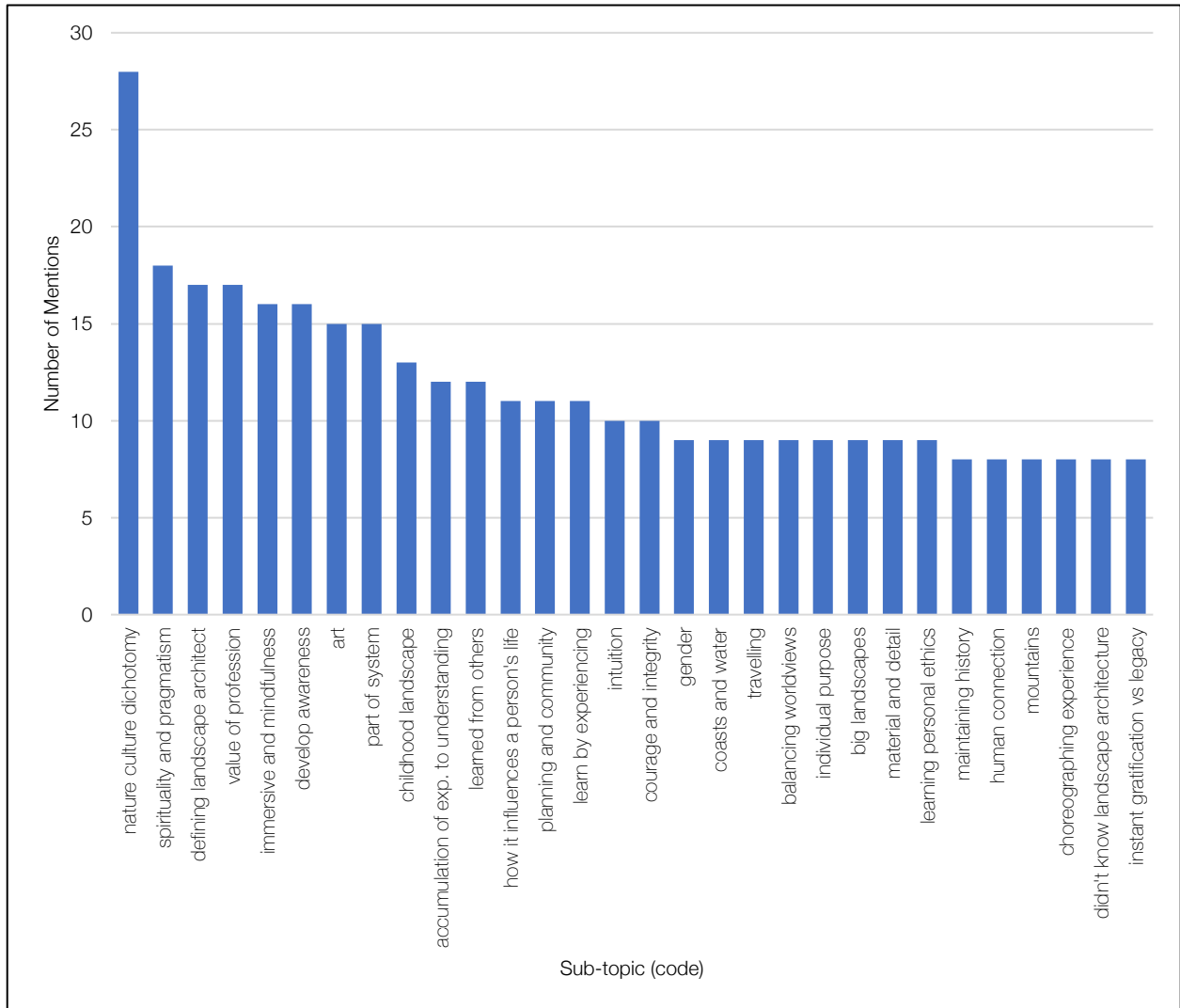
Frequency of Sub-Topics Mentioned in Interviews (Top 30)
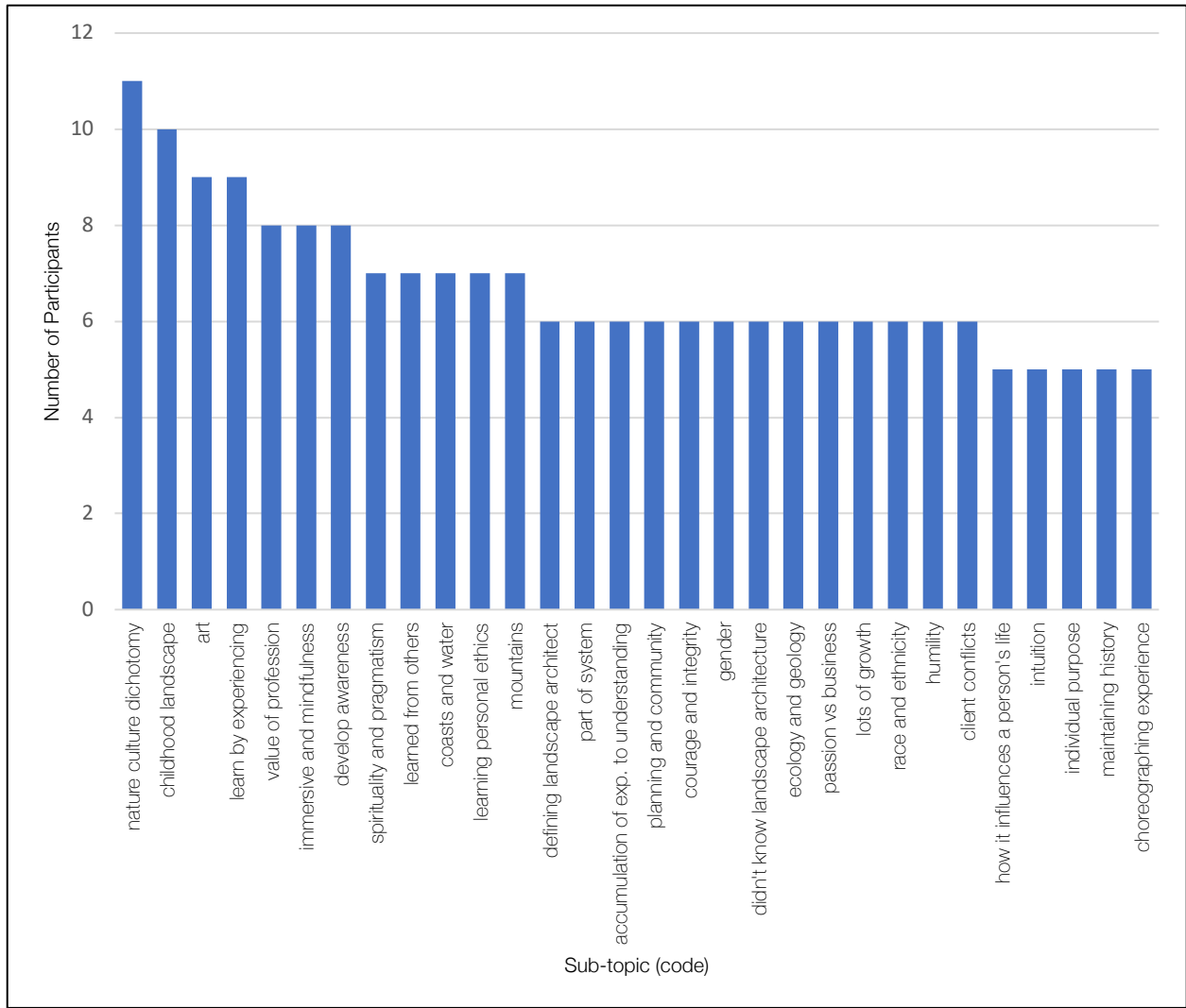
Frequency of Interview Participants Mentioning Sub-Topics (Top 30)