

A Place Called Home

Master Thesis in Landscape Architecture, 30 hp

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Introduction

My own driving forces

I am interested in what constitutes a good place and how people perceive that. My thought was that the most basic point of which people perceive and evaluate places might be home. At least for me my home as a place has certainly given me my own unique opinion about places. I think it does also affect my preference of landscape as well.

The inspiration for this paper came from many different sources. It was during my education when some thoughts what teachers expressed lingered in my mind and I was not sure if I personally would agree with these statements or not. I have always been interested in what constitutes 'a good place'.

The basic thing what everybody hears probably during landscape architecture studies is the concept of 'genius loci' – the spirit of the place. As one of my teachers explained on my first year of my studies: 'Genius loci - that means spirit of a place - is something special what some places have and some do not. 'Genius loci' is something what makes some places better and more special than the others and it is something what all the people feel the same way. People all do recognize these places which have genius loci and feel it.' – This is how I remember him putting it. And it felt a bit too bold statement for me, but then again – it was his interpretation of the original theory. What is important, is the fact that this interpretation has lingered in my mind ever since and has been a source of inspiration for this paper.

Another mayor driving force for discussing the place from the grounds of individual's home place experience, compared to experiences of places later in life, came from a course paper which I wrote with Monika Kokoszka. In this paper we discussed whether landscape preference is connected with one's cultural background and where they come originally. We questioned five different people from five different places who all studied during that period in Alnarp. We used our own life stories to discuss the theme as well and summarized our work with many different assumptions. One of them was that home might be a special ground from where a person starts to discuss these matters. (Kokoszka&Aksli, 2008)

Aim and goal of the paper

My aim in this paper is to reflect upon how people perceive places based on their experiences of places. I will discuss following questions: do they consider home as special places with which they compare places later in their lives? Would they rather think that the other places which they have visited later on in their life have been more important for them to understand their perception of place? Do they tend to prefer landscapes which are similar to their childhood landscape? Do they consider themselves attached to one certain place or they think they are mobile person? Do they believe that somewhere else is always better than where they currently are? Maybe they have thought why it might be so?

In order to reflect upon these questions I conducted an interview study where I discussed these things with six landscape architect students who are on their last year of studies. As I personally think that these themes are important for landscape architect to try to understand, I wanted to see if my fellow students have been thinking on these themes and what are their opinions.

In last part of my paper I will reflect on the outcome of my interview study, compare it with what the well known theorists have written about it and connect it with my own lived world experience and thoughts.

Background

Theories and Concepts

When defining the concept of place, one encounters quite a big task as there are very many definitions from different theorists and they all have their own angle to discuss this theme. One statement trying to define place on a basic level is that places can be as big as town or country and as small as a house or a single room (Low and Altman, 1992). What interested me more than the scale was the essence what makes some locations places: 'Place is not just the 'there' of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon' (Relph, 1967).

As seen from the previous quote – location is important for people to locate themselves in space, but space becomes place when it has a meaning for a person, when a person has a unique connection to that specific site. Tuan has discussed it as follows – the meaning of a place lies in the way people think and talk about places. People talk about 'spirit of a place' or a 'personality' of a place, therefore they give human features to places; that is because as he has written it: spirits are believed to dwell in a place whereas personality is given to a place to make it unique the same way as humans consider themselves to be unique (Tuan 1976).

In another article Tuan discusses what it means when a person claims to have 'a sense of place'. According to him having a sense of place means to know a place and to understand a place (Tuan 1978). In this case, places can acquire meanings in several ways. By claiming that a certain location has a sense of place one also claims to understand and know the place. Therefore it can be said that this place is perceived, understood and lived on a personal level.

But when coming back to the original starting point for my paper – home places – what does make home more special than any other personalized and lived place? What is the meaning of home for an individual? When asked this question, one might immediately connect the concept of home with one's home-house as an artefact or just as a place where one dwells. Kimberley Dovey has defined home as kind of relationship between people and their environment; it is an emotionally based and meaningful relationship between the dwellers and their dwelling place (Dovey, 1985).

So what kind of emotionally based meaningful relationship it might be between people and their environment? Maybe it might be attachment to our childhood home – home has strong roots in the experiences of childhood where the visual images of home were formed, therefore it can be suggested that there is a deep connection between these childhood experiences and the environmental attitudes and preferences later in adult life (Cooper Marcus 1978, cited in Dovey 1985).

And going further – childhood places are also important for many people, because they act as an important reference point for them later in life – it is important to sense that this place is uniquely and privately your own, because you have been experiencing that place as strictly personal (Relph, 1976). But another reason why childhood places are important in the light of

landscape architecture is that ‘ the spaces and views that surround us when we are children become, in course of time, inner landscapes that we incorporate into our childhood memories (Sebba, 1991).

This is the reason why I thought that home places and especially childhood home places might be interesting to investigate. But when I started to think about the fact that many people tend to move from one place to another many times during their life and individuals also travel nowadays quite much, we should not forget that these experiences of mobility and changing of environments also might affect the way we perceive places and landscapes.

So what about the balance between moving between places and staying in one place? In general attachment to one place - may it be home for instance - has been seen as something what gives the feeling of security, belonging and possibility to identity oneself but at the same time attachment to a place might also create the feeling of imprisonment and restriction (Relph, 1976; Gustafson 2001). And when discussing mobility it might be a medium for the idea of freedom and give opportunity for personal growth (Gustafson, 2001) but at the same time it has been said to create the feeling of loss and uprootedness (Relph, 1976).

As Relph summarized this dilemma – it is important to balance the need to stay and the desire to escape, because when one of these needs is overly satisfied, a person might feel either nostalgic about a lost place and sense being uprooted or, on the contrary feel restricted and suppressed by the feeling of being tied down to one place and being imprisoned by it (Relph, 1976).

Method

The method for this study changed during my research for this thesis. Originally, I planned to carry out a questionnaire study with ten different qualitative and quantitative questions, which would have collected information about people's understanding of conceptions such as home, mobility, attachment and preference between places experienced during one's life span. In that point, also the number of subjects I planned to question was about fifteen people.

As I worked through more and more literature, I realized that these questions are rather hard to answer, because one has to be deeply aware of her place experiences and should have been thinking about these questions before, in order to give me valuable information. Therefore it seemed to be a better idea to have a smaller number of interviews instead. Interviews gave me the opportunity to specify the questions if the interviewee did not quite follow my thoughts and it also had the advantage to have a deeper knowledge about the interviewee's experiences and opinions than a questionnaire would have given me.

Another reason for preferring interviews to questionnaires was that my previous experience of working with questionnaires has shown that the subjects tend to give up and not finish answering the questions because of lack of motivation or just because they have not understood the questions.

The Design of the Interview study

I chose to interview six people who are all studying landscape architecture and are right now on their final year. Three of them are Swedes and three of them are foreign to Sweden. All of them have been studying in The Agricultural University in Alnarp. The ages differ from 21 to 36 years between the subjects.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and the amount of different information was rather big, so the number of six subjects seemed sufficient enough to be able to analyze and reflect upon what was told. As Kvale has stated in his books on interviewing method: 'In qualitative interview studies, the number of subjects tends to be either too small or too large. If the number of subjects is too small, it is not possible to make statistical generalizations or to test hypothesis of differences among groups. If the number of subjects is too large, then it is not possible to make penetrating interpretations of interviews' (Kvale, 1996). As my aim was not so much about making statistical generalizations but to have a span of different opinions and discussions to reflect upon, the number of six people interviewed seemed satisfactory.

In my study, I combined a semi-structured interview with a small questionnaire just immediately before the interview started. The purpose of the questionnaire was to act as an ice-breaker for the subject and also as a useful trigger for starting the interview for me. The questions asked during the interview were grouped by four themes: home, mobility, attachment and preference.

Conducting the Interviews

When I started the interview I first handed in a questionnaire with five qualitative questions. The answers of the questions were explained by the interviewees during the interview if they felt that it was needed to explain them further or I was not sure I understood them. These questions proved to be a good starting point for an oral interview. As mentioned above, the interviews were semi-structured, but the main questions which were discussed were:

- What does the concept of ‘home’ mean for the subject?
- How important is their childhood home for them as a place on present day?
- How mobile do they consider themselves?
- How much they have been travelling and do they enjoy travelling?
- What has travelling given them as an experience and how does it affect them?
- How easy it is for them to get attached to a new place?
- Do they prefer travelling to staying at home and why?
- Do they often feel homesick and why?
- Would they like to move back to the place they come from?
- Which place do they prefer for living and why?
- Do they believe that somewhere else is always better than they are right now?

There was a difference concerning how much we discussed each question that is why the duration of the interviews varied from forty minutes to one hour. I did not want to push people when I felt that they did not want to tell me more as I thought that this might have influenced their answers.

After the interview, I listened to the recordings and wrote down the important information for my thesis as notes. As my timeline was too short for a properly transcribing every single word, I wrote the interviews down in a form of story as objectively as I could. These can be found under the heading of ‘Interview Study Interpretations’. The filled in questionnaires can be found in ‘Appendix’. The ‘Reflections’ is written based on the information found in interview interpretations, questionnaires and the theoretical background found from the literature.

Interview Study Interpretations

Interview nr 1: Lena

Home

When Lena was asked what the concept of home meant for her, she answered that it might be something what changes over the time – when she was younger she considered home to be the place where her family lived, that means the childhood home. Later when she moved away from the childhood home and she started to work as an au pair abroad, her home was also where her ‘family’ was – that means where the family she worked for lived. This also varied sometimes, as in some cases when she did not like the family she was working for the place where she was living did not feel like home as well. So the main importance of home to her is to have the people who are essential for her around her.

In total, she has been living in quite many places, as she started to move around since she left her childhood home and has not quite yet settled down. Lena grew up in Sweden, but as one part of her family is from Norway and the other from Finland, she visited these places often and they became homes as well: ‘I packed my bags and went home again...from the other home.’

She has realized the importance of her childhood home more and more as the time passes by in many different ways: ‘The small things what you remember when you think about it and reflect upon it.’ The Finnish home was situated in a long street-type village, behind the house was a hill with spruces and behind that a big cemetery.

The Norwegian home was situated far north – there was dramatic change between the landscapes. Changes characterise the experience of the Norwegian home-landscape in general – the weather kept changing and also the direction of the wind with it. The water level of the ocean also changed many times a day. These various home-landscape experiences define her as 50% Finnish, 50% Norwegian and 100% Swedish all at the same time.

The main memory which is connected to the childhood home in Hyddinge in the suburb of Stockholm is the feeling of security.

Travelling

After moving away from there, she has been living in England and USA when she was working as an au pair. Later she worked and lived also in Switzerland and Norway. ‘You have to keep travelling because there is so many things happening!’ as she put it. And she wondered more about travelling: ‘I wonder if you can be a traveller in your mind and stay in one place. For instance if you would take two people – one is moving around and experiencing the places all the time and the other is sitting at home and travelling through

books, music and all the other possible means to learn about new places and cultures. How could you compare these different experiences of places and can you at all, actually? In order to reflect upon your experiences you need distance. Reflecting is really thinking about it and then moving on.'

Attachment

When Lena was asked if she ever gets homesick during her travels she said that as she defines herself as traveller by heart, she only gets homesick when the food is bad. That is why she always carries her own cookbook with her, where she writes down recipes which she has been collecting from friends she has made during her travels. This is how she can be able to recreate the food anytime and keep her friends close as well.

Just after telling the story about her cookbook, she came to the realization: 'Maybe the concept of home lies in a good kitchen? A good kitchen is a statement: it means having good people, gathering and having good food. My kitchen is my cookbook. It might be all what I need to create a good home...'

The opposite side of travelling – staying in one place is affecting her place perception: 'When you stay in one place you do not realize the changes anymore. Like the changes outside the window – seasons changing, nature changing. You have to work harder to notice it after a while.'

Preference

Lena could see herself living one day in a similar place where she grew up – in Stockholm's suburban environment. She would like to see around her a lot of air and big view to the water – similar to all her three childhood places. And she would like to live on a top of the hill – as she used to during her childhood home in Huddinge.

Conclusion – is the grass greener on the other side?

When she was asked if she agrees that somewhere else is always better than where one currently is, she did not agree. 'Because, if you cannot appreciate what you have in that point of life where you currently are, then you are just a dreamer and you do not accomplish anything. Of course there are interesting things out there, but you have to be able to acknowledge the moment.' She defined herself as a traveller by heart, but she said that right now she is quite ready to find a more stable place to stay. She is looking forward to try out the concept of travelling by such mediums like music and books and still be a traveller in her mind. Travelling is important to her to keep her mind open for new options and experiences, but at the same time she is looking for a more fixed place to call home in this phase of life where she is right now.

Interview nr 2: Liina

Home

For Liina, the concept of home meant her childhood home – the little town of Jõgeva in Estonia, where she grew up and lived until she went to the University. She did not think that there was anything pretty or special about that town, she just remembers the view from the window, which consisted of a big chimney, radio mast and railway on the background. The town consisted from some Soviet time flat-houses and some older individual houses made of bricks and wood.

What she remembers as a positive place, is her grandparents home where she stayed most of the summer during her childhood. It was a small village by the sea; she remembers the smell of pine trees and the sea there. She felt much more home there because she liked the environment there more which let her to play outdoors.

At her hometown, she remembers roaming in weird and ugly places – she liked to discover abandoned and ‘hidden’ places like the yard of the old hospital building. One thing that her hometown has taught her is that she would try to avoid planning such living environments as much as possible in her future work. ‘The whole town is situated in a wrong place – it is between the railway and the big highway. Further down from the highway there is a river – this would have been a much better place aesthetically to have houses. But although the town has got its name from the river (The name is Jõgeva and river in Estonian is jõgi) it is still basically a town which formed when the railway came around the with a train station.’

Attachment

Liina did not feel being attached to her childhood home almost at all. ‘Of course I am very welcome there every time, but it is a small flat and do not even have my own room there anymore.’ She feels that some places where she has been living since she left her hometown to the university were more special and she had some degree of attachment to these places, but she never felt completely home in any of these places, since they did not feel totally comfortable. Sometimes it was the people she was living with, sometimes the lack of privacy. Even when it felt as a good place to live it still never felt home for her, as she knew, that all these places were temporary to live in.

Travelling

She likes travelling and she does not feel that anything is keeping her from doing that. Right now she is in Sweden and she feels like moving on from here as well. If she would move away right now, the most important thing for her would be to find new people to surround her and communicate with – to have somebody to share emotions and thoughts. She describes herself as wanderer who likes to discover new places, right now she is looking for new experiences of places and people and stable place to stay is not so important right now.

When Liina was asked about homesickness, she said that she does not feel homesick at all; she only misses her parents sometimes and wonders if everything is still fine with them. ‘The

situation is only temporary, sooner or later I will go back there (Estonia).’ And she continues: ‘The older you get the more you do not want to wander around anymore.’ So she thinks that the need for roots and getting attached to a place comes with age.

Conclusion – is the grass greener on the other side?

She believes that grass might be greener on the other side and she is still interested to discover that further. Right now, she is not bothered about feeling alien and not having roots, she has prevented herself so far to put down roots anywhere, as the living situation has always seemed to be temporary. Liina also said that she might need more time and distance to appreciate the places where she has been, since now she has not been thinking about these questions so much and they are not so important for her.

Interview nr 3: Julia

Home

The concept of home for Julia is her childhood home in Gothenburg where she has her family and friends. Another important aspect of Gothenburg besides having all the important people there is the nature and landscape in home – the sea, the rocks, the forest and the mountains. The essence of home is therefore her family (people) and the landscape around Gothenburg (nature).

She moved to Skåne when she started to study in the University, she does not feel attachment to Skåne, although she has been living here for quite some years. In Skåne she has been living in Malmö and in Lomma in different places. She misses the nature as she knows it from home when she is living in Skåne – the landscape is too flat to start with and there is no forest. Everything is surrounded by big fields and every time when she wants to take a walk, she has to take along way around the highway or fields to get somewhere, there are no small trails to take a stroll on. The only place which reminds something like a forest is the Alnarp’s park.

She has also lived one year in Dalsland where she studied for a year in a little village. There was a lot of forest and a big lake close by, so she remembers mostly the big open water.

Travelling

When she was asked about travelling – how important it is for her and does she like it – she said that, yes she likes travelling but for not too long period of time. She likes to see new landscapes on her travels, but she does not think that they are prettier or better than Swedish landscape. The last trip she took was to France and she really liked it, but she still prefers the Swedish landscape.

In general, travelling is a bit of pushing the boundaries for her, it takes some effort to go for a trip. She does know that in the end she enjoys being on the trip, but she is somewhat afraid of the unexpected things what might happen, unknown situations and the fact that she might not

understand the foreign language completely. Julia does not like to travel too often – that means not more than couple a times a year – because it makes her tired and she needs time to take it all in – the new experiences she had and felt. Travelling is constant changes according to her and she really enjoys stability.

Attachment

In a place where she lives, it is very important for her to feel comfortable – that is why she likes to pull out her own carpets, hang her own curtains and buy some plants to make a new place to live her own. She goes often home from Skåne to visit her family and friends. Julia felt homesick at first when she moved away from home when she started the University. She dealt with it by making lots of new friends. But, when coming back to living conditions, she generally likes quietness and having a possibility to be alone; even when she was renting an apartment for some time in Malmö, she was living there all by herself. But then again, there are times when she feels that she needs more people – like when she started to write her thesis, she moved back to Lomma, so that she would be able to see more people in the dormitory's common kitchen.

Preference

She really likes Sweden in general as a place to live and she is very fond of Gothenburg. As she still has close friends in Gothenburg she would like to move back there, but as she is right now looking for a job, she would not mind to move somewhere else in Sweden. Especially Northern Sweden seems appealing. She does not feel like moving to a foreign country, maybe only to Denmark or Norway which is pretty close and kind of similar to Sweden when compared to other countries, but she would do that only when she would find an interesting job there. Some time ago, she was contemplating about going to study abroad in France, because she really likes French and she can speak it a bit, but that feeling soon passed, as she got some years older.

Conclusion – is grass greener on the other side?

She does not think that grass is greener on the other side. She really likes Sweden and feels a very deep connection to it, especially to Gothenburg where her family and friends are. She misses the landscape of Gothenburg a lot as well when she is in Skåne. Julia likes to travel and to see new places, although it seems a bit of effort for her sometimes. And although she enjoys travelling once she is on the trip, she does not want to do it very often and she needs time to rest from it and go back home to contemplate on the different experiences she had on the trip.

Interview nr 4 – Johan

Home

When Johan was asked to explain what the concept of home means to him, it was a bit hard for him. As he said: ‘I could not find anything physical to define as home, as I have been moving from one home to another home. My parents broke up, when I was nine years old and from that time on I had two homes – I visited my father every other weekend and most of time lived with my mother. That created a semi-home, because the feeling between father’s and mother’s home was not different, although the physical environment was different. They felt both equally ‘home’, which is why I answered ‘the smell of home’. Because for now, both of my parents have moved away from the places they used to live and the new places do not smell like ‘home’ or have that feeling anymore as the childhood homes.

The essence of ‘home’ is created by the feelings, emotions and smells what create comfort for him. Smell triggers memories and emotions: ‘having freshly brewed tea and lying in a hammock – it is just soothing and relaxing.’

Another reason why it is hard for him to explain the concept of ‘home’ is that he has moved several times during her childhood. He was born in Borås and then soon they moved to a village near by Borås. Later they moved near Varberg and he started to go to school in Varberg as well. Moving was difficult for him in childhood, because he left his friends behind every time when they moved again. After finishing high school he moved to Umeå then to Malmö and now he lives in Lomma.

He does not like city as a place to live. He was living in the countryside when he was a child. For him Lund and Malmö are too hectic and spending time there makes him tired, that is also why he moved away from Malmö to Lomma.

It is hard for him in general to define where he is from and which place is the actual home: ‘I cannot say where I am from – when I say from Umeå, I feel I am lying because I have not lived there my whole life. If I say I am from Borås – I was born there but I have not lived there much – I feel like I am lying again. I lived most of my childhood near Varberg, but I was not born there – so can I say I am from that town? I am not sure.’ So, he does not have the feeling of being from any of these physical locations. When somebody asks where he is from, he usually says that he is from Sweden and then tries to explain his journey to show how these places define him as a person.

Another interesting aspect is that his father’s parents are from Estonia, from an island called Hiiumaa. He feels a strong connection to that place, although he has been there only once. His parents have told him that he used to tell to the kindergarten teacher that he was talking to his grandmother quite often (who was from Hiiumaa) but the grandmother actually died before Johan was born.

Travelling

Johan really likes travelling: experiencing and seeing new places and cultures, but he thinks that a couple of weeks ‘the haze of newness’ vanishes and all the places start to look a bit same, because the everyday life kicks in. In general, he thinks that people in various places are not so different at all – the basic thoughts and view of life tend to be very similar.

He does not like the big cities when he is travelling: ‘There are too much people, too much noise, too much smells, too much everything to take in at the same time.’ – So he needs to go to a park or somewhere else quiet to relax. Johan really likes to interact with people but he likes ‘to be able to choose when he talks to people and when to confront them.’ Sometimes he gets tired of other people and then it is crucial to have his own place to be in.

Preference

Johan prefers the countryside to city environment and would live there one day in future. He thinks it is because where he grew up. In general he prefers forest and inland landscape more than the seaside landscape. His preference of forest comes from the time when he was a child and his step-grandfather used to take him to the woods, tell and teach him about nature there and go fishing together. Since there is no forest in Lomma, he likes to walk along the beach, because it is the biggest natural element in the surrounding. Otherwise he is not so keen on the seaside and beach. He would like to live near the ridges up in Northern Skåne, for the reason that there is the beech forest and the mild climate of Skåne which he really likes.

Conclusion – is grass greener on the other side?

Johan does not believe that somewhere else is always better than he currently is. He grew out of this feeling when he was quite young, as his father used to take him travelling quite much and all the places felt the same on the basic level. When he goes travelling right now, he likes to find out before what is different and interesting about that specific place, so that he could consciously turn his attention to these details.

Generally, he could be wherever in the world as long as he knows that he has a safe place to return to – a place where to have a cup of tea in a hammock. Right now, he feels that his footings are his parents – they have given him complex roots but at the same time very stable roots on the emotional level. He is afraid that if he would not find a stable place to stay before his parents would pass away, then he would have trouble finding his certain stable place to stay. Having roots is to him very important on the emotional and cultural level, but not so important in a geographical sense. Economically, socially and geographically he is a Swede. Historically and emotionally he has strong ties to Estonia, Hiiumaa.

Interview nr 5 – Moya

Home

When Moya was asked what does the concept ‘home’ mean for her, she answered: ‘My bed, my room, my hometown – my territory. And also people who are very close to me.’

When investigating further, she defines home as a place where she can do anything she wants – feel freely, eat anything (because the food in Sweden is very different from the food in China and she cannot always afford to eat what she wants). She really misses her native food after being living in Sweden for two years.

Another aspect what restricts her to feel completely home in Sweden is the language. She cannot speak Swedish and that makes her feel as an outsider sometimes: ‘You do not understand people on the bus or in other public places. You cannot understand what they are talking about and you miss out the common social situation you would be in your home country. You cannot steal a good joke or a good story which you overheard from somebody. You are in your isolated bubble. And you cannot understand everything what is written as well and you might miss out important information.’

She grew up in Beijing in China. Moya and her family have been changing their place to live for twelve times in Beijing. She was born in the East part of Beijing, she studied in the West part and her family mainly lived in the North part. Last year her family settled down in a big apartment in the North part and they plan to stay there.

As the structure of Beijing is very special compared to European towns, she also explained what difference between the parts of the city is. West part of the city is where there are politicians and other government officials. On the East there are all the embassies of foreign countries, this also known as the business district. Southern part is the oldest part of Beijing; this is where most of the local people and immigrants live.

One place which was more special than all the other homes she remembers from her childhood is her Grandmother’s house where she grew up. It was an old traditional style Chinese house with a courtyard in the middle with two fruit trees. She remembers the happy times she had there as a child and also having dinner and lunch outside in the courtyard. Now the whole area, where the house was situated is demolished and turned into a public park. It was a special house compared to the other home-houses, because all the others were just plain concrete apartment buildings with nothing special that would have distinguished them from the others.

Travelling

Sweden is the first foreign country she has been to. She has been travelling a lot in China, but she had never been abroad before, since going abroad requires a visa. Before, all her knowledge of foreign countries came from books, TV and other means of media. Now that she has been to Sweden for two years and also travelled around Europe, she realizes something she did not know before – that Europe and USA are very different. She thought

that they would be the same as they both represent the Western world. But now she has understood that Europe has rich traditions and culture compared to USA. ‘The way people think is totally different! The way cities have been built is totally different in Europe – the organic structure for instance. The United States have been built on an empty spot, whilst Europe has a long history!’

The main difference between Sweden and China is that there is a lot of nature here. And it was surprising how easily people can access nature here – everything is so well connected by the roads and paths. ‘In China we have also nature, but it is very hard to reach it. It is so far away, in natural reserves and people do not go there much.’ She as well did not go out of Beijing very often because: ‘Beijing has everything!’

Preference

When discussing the differences between the Swedish and the Chinese landscape, she says that she prefers urban landscape and the city, as she is from a very big city. As she said: ‘Because people are so interesting!’ Sweden is too empty for her, there are so little people compared to its area. Lund and Malmö are not big and lively enough for her, she misses having a lot of people and being able to communicate freely.

Nevertheless, she does like natural elements in the city, like different plants and especially grass, because in Beijing people are not allowed to walk on the grass. That is due to the fact that they have so many people and the grass would probably be soon destroyed.

Conclusion – is the grass greener on the other side?

When she was asked that question, she answered: ‘It is good to wander around when you are young, experience places and also to get to know yourself.’ She could probably live anywhere in the world, but she would miss the Chinese language, as she believes that the language gathers the essence of the Chinese culture, the roots and everything that is connected to it. Moya misses reading, writing and speaking in Chinese and as she can never deny the fact that she has Chinese origin wherever she goes.

[Interview nr 6 – Monika](#)

Home

For Monika ‘home’ constitutes from three major aspects: people, memories and the gardens. The house as such does not carry the essence of home: ‘Because the house might burn down, but that does not mean that you are immediately homeless, you still have your family and your memories.’ The physical building is not home – home is anywhere as long as she is with her family or people who are important for her.

Monika was born in the USA in Chicago and soon her family moved to Canada. She has been living in three different houses with her family in Canada. In the last house where her parents

are living right now, she has been living the longest time and with this place she has the most of her childhood memories. Another important place for her is her Polish Grandmother's farm where she spent quite long time during summers and she still remembers it very vividly, although nothing is left there and right now the place is abandoned. But the memories are very important to define her home and who she is.

Her identity is complex, as her parents are Polish but she has spent most of her life in Canada, she was born in USA and she finished a Polish high school in Canada. She has visited her Polish relatives several times and speaks in Polish with her family. Therefore, when she is in Canada she says that she is Polish and when she is somewhere else, like last year in Sweden studying abroad, she says that she is from Canada, not Canadian. 'I am very Polish, but not Polish enough,' as she said.

Her concept of home consists of two places as well – the Grandma's farm in Poland and the current home house in Canada where her parents are living, because she grew up there – these are two places she feels a greater degree of attachment. The nature has always been very important for her as she remembers the outdoors environment very clearly from different places she has been living and she used to draw pictures from nature all the time when she was little. Grandma's farm was an especially magical place, as she remembers all the chickens and fruit trees – all the farm life generally which she had never seen before.

Right now she is travelling back and forth between her student home in Guelph and her parents home Mississauga, but soon she will finish her studies and that makes her rather sad because she has to leave her 'Guelph family' behind.

Travelling

Travelling is very important for Monika: 'It opens your eyes in so many ways. Before you go travelling you do not realize many things which are actually there – like how many homeless people there are for instance in European towns. You never see them at daytime, but once you have to spend one night in the park, you will see them.' The biggest 'eye-opening' experience was the trip to Mexico, because everything was so different – the way the traffic was planned, the food, the immense amount of people on the streets, the Spanish which the people were speaking compared to the original European-Spanish. She enjoys travelling very much and it is vital for her right now to move around more and see even more.

Attachment

She does not become attached to any place right now, because all the places seem temporary. But it does not take a long time to get used to a place and start feeling comfortable. She rarely unpacks her things when she goes to a new place – things stay in the bag. Even when she came to Sweden at first she cleaned the room and then eventually many weeks later started to unpack slightly. She did not have any territory claiming ritual; even when she has been living in Guelph during most of her University studies, she has not hung paintings on the wall; they just lay in the corner. She does not feel homesickness at all, even when she was in Sweden,

because she feels that she really does not have much to miss. She does not have so close relationship with her friends that she would miss them.

What makes a place for her are the people who matter to her. Like her family at home or the people she was living with in Sweden last year in the dormitory. But the dormitory does not seem to be a place anymore for her, as the people who made that place have all left. The place does exist physically but not mentally anymore, it only exists in memories. She has the same feeling about her school – as she will be finished very soon and feels that she will lose the place as it is right now. The studios and the classrooms are not the same anymore without the people she was studying with.

Preference

She would like to leave Canada and go travelling somewhere right now, as she feels that she is too young to look for a stable place and there is nothing to hold on to at home right now. ‘Eventually I will have to go back to Canada and stay there forever anyway,’ as she said. She thinks that the desire to travel is caused by her young age and by her human-nature as well. She will probably live one day in Canada as her brother and sister are there and they are very important for her. She does not know what kind of environment to prefer now, as she would like to travel and see more.

One thing she knows is that nature has always appealed to her, like certain parts of Canada, where there are pine forests, many lakes and a lot of other kinds of beautiful nature. Another example of beautiful nature is the landscape around her Grandma’s farm. It was a farmstead bordered by some trees and behind the trees there was vast and flat landscape of fields reaching the horizon where you could see the railway tracks. It is not beautiful landscape as such, but the memories which are connected to this place make it beautiful and special for her.

Conclusion – is the grass greener on the other side?

She does not think that somewhere else is better than she is, but she just feels that she has nothing to hold onto right now in Canada. She would like to travel around – and, maybe discover that somewhere else might be something better still.

Critical Reflections on Interviews

During the time when I was carrying out my interview study, I realized that the stories that the six people interviewed told me were quite different for many reasons. Firstly – on some of the questions the interviewees had very insightful views and understandings on these subjects, as they had been thinking on these questions before and it was important for them as well to understand their own opinions on these matters – these interviews were very deeply reflective and full of diverse information. For some other interviewees these questions were not so important at this phase of life where they currently are, and their interviews also lasted for shorter time as they were very sure on their opinions and they did not reflect upon them more thoroughly or elaborate their answers so extensively.

Another reason why it might have turned out that way is just, that people's characters are different, because some people are just more reflective in their overall being whilst the others are more concrete on their opinions.

The third reason might be that my own methods were not sufficient enough – maybe I was not able to make my questions understood enough for those who have not been thinking on them before. It is much easier for an interviewee to answer on these questions as one of them said during the interview: 'I was just discussing the same questions with my sister last week!'

Analyze and reflections on the interpretations of the interviews

All these stories are full of valuable and interesting information which I will analyze and reflect upon as follows. I took out three main themes and I picked out certain interesting general thoughts on these questions. I also used my small questionnaire study which I handed in just before the interview began. I connected these to my literature study and saw what was common and what was different and why it might be so.

'Home'

As I thought that home might be the initial base on what people evaluate places and landscapes, I had to investigate what 'home' means for them: what are the elements which constitute home and which places they have considered to have been homes for them.

As seen from the 'Interview Interpretations above', people mostly expressed the importance of childhood home or homes. I got different stories where the interviewees had grown up, what was the surrounding environment like and so on. Although it was not my intention, as it turned out, I managed to interview people with various cultural backgrounds. I had intentionally picked out three Swedes and three foreigners, but the multicultural background of some of the interviewees came as a surprise to me.

That fact also gave an added dimension to my study for which I was not aiming for – the question about multiple identity and home-place. My first intention was to interview three foreigners in addition to three Swedes to get some interesting variables in the results. In this work, I am not going into depth with the question how places influence person's identity, for the reason that it is a very interesting topic, but the frames of my work are limited with the experiences connected to home place and places later visited in life.

More specifically speaking - I also asked in my questionnaire (added in the appendix), what are the five things that create a home and then later asked the interviewees to elaborate and express their views why it might be so. From the questionnaires I got following answers:

Table 1: What creates ‘home’ for you?

Subject nr 1	Subject nr 2	Subject nr 3	Subject nr4	Subject nr 5	Subject nr 6
safety	people	family	the smell of home	(her) bed	people
sea	comfort	rocks	the hammock	family members	memories
airport	memories	sea	the tea kettle	friends	gardens
warmth	pleasurable	forest	the feeling you get when you have been away for a long time and get back home	speaking Chinese	-
air	esthetical environment	West coast (of Sweden)		cheap beer	-

To explain how I classified these answers, I must add the small explanations by the interviewees. The classification is not just something what popped to my mind later – it worked out its structure during the interviews already, because for instance the answers ‘cheap beer’ being a cultural aspect was explained by the answerer herself. So this is what I was told straight after the questionnaire:

- **Subject nr 1 (Lena):**

Lena described at first her idea of a ‘home’ as where the landscape is open and has a lot of air, the sea is very close and also the airport – as these have been the common features of the places which she has considered home. Safety and warmth are two things what a home should have in order to feel like home, and her childhood homes definitely had that kind of atmosphere. After finishing explaining her answers to this question, she continued to think about ‘home’ as such and then went into a deep discussion how important it is for her to also have the people or family around her. Since she has been living in many different countries, in these places where she did not get along with people, it never really felt home.

- **Subject nr 2 (Liina):**

Liina explained her questionnaire answers about ‘home’ by the fact that for her home means the childhood home where she grew up and lived until she went to study in the University – so the people - that means her family and the comfort, memories and ‘the pleasurable environment of home’ are the most important things. Esthetical environment is important for her from the point of view that she never considered her hometown beautiful and she looks for beauty in the places she goes right now.

- **Subject nr 3 (Julia):**

Julia really misses her childhood home, which is the essence of 'home' for her. That means the whole package - the sea, the rocks the forest and the West coast – everything which describes her hometown Gothenburg without forgetting the most important aspect – her family and also her friends as she later told. She was the person amongst all the interviewed six people who was most attached to the place where she is from.

- **Subject nr 4 (Johan):**

Johan has moved so many times during his years of childhood, that he could not relate the meaning of 'home' to any of the physical locations or places he has been living in. Also, his parents got divorced when he was young and then he started to move between the 'homes' as well – he did not feel the difference between the mothers and fathers house, as one being the genuine one and only 'home'.

That is why he was trying to describe his perception of home by the elements which create the emotionally loaded meaning of home: the smells, the feelings associated with it and also the objects like the hammock and the tea kettle with which to brew a cup of fresh tea, in order to create this serene and comforting environment which he recognizes as home. Otherwise, when he would try and locate which of the places he has been living, would be 'the home', he could not answer. He just knows that since both his parents have moved away from the places they used to live, the new places where they are living right now do not feel or smell like home anymore.

- **Subject nr 5 (Moya):**

Moya has been living in Sweden for two years and for her, the home is back in China in Beijing where she has her family and friends and where she can speak Chinese freely – these are the things what she misses obviously. And for her, home was also very much about her territory – her own bed and room. Having her own space generally, which she could manipulate the way she wants and where she could feel freely is something what she considers 'home'.

Another aspect what she misses in Sweden is cheap beer, as the lack of this is something very characteristic to Sweden. From that last sentence, it can be seen that the overall Swedish situation makes her feel restricted and not being able to feel free and do whatever she wants – because the prices of beer and food are much more higher in Sweden and – she has to make choices all the time about what to eat, as she cannot afford the same kind of lifestyle as at home in China.

- **Subject nr 6 (Monika):**

Monika expressed her idea that the most essential thing for her to create home is to have the people around who are important for her. To have her memories of places she has been living in and the gardens and landscapes around the places are additional characteristics which are vital. She remembers vividly the gardens of the houses where she has been living.

In addition the outdoor environment experience of the farm which her Grandmother used to have and where she spent one summer in Poland has been memorised as significant. She remembers it was a land full of magic with all the fruit trees and animals there, but the place is right now pretty much torn down, as nobody is living there and the houses are falling apart. Seeing that this has happened made her very sad and a bit nostalgic; nevertheless she has good memories of the time spent there and this place lives on in her memories as one of the special places of childhood.

Besides all that - she has a similar story as some the other interviewees - she has moved many times during childhood, therefore she does not feel that home could be any of the physical houses she has been living in. And that is why she listed the people, the memories and the gardens as the major aspects defining 'home'.

The outcome of the questionnaire

According to their answers I divided the answers to groups. As it can be seen from the table above – the main elements described are connected to these factors:

- People
- Landscape
- Feelings and emotions
- Cultural and social aspects
- Objects

Table 2: The answers of the Subjects and the factors put together.

	People	Landscape	Feelings and emotions	Cultural and social aspects	Objects
Subject 1	-----	sea + airport +air	safety + warmth	-----	-----
Subject 2	people	esthetical environment	comfort + memories + pleasurable	-----	-----
Subject3	family members	rocks + sea + forest + West coast (of Sweden)	-----	-----	-----
Subject 4	-----	-----	the smell of home + the feeling ...	-----	the hammock + the tea kettle
Subject 5	family members + friends	-----	-----	speaking Chinese + cheap beer	(her) bed
Subject 6	people	gardens	memories	-----	-----

General reflections regarding 'home'

Julia: Rootedness or Sense of Place?

After listening Julia's interview and going through her answers of the questionnaire I started to think that she answered like this for the reason that she might be semi-rooted in an unconscious way to her home-place. Or that she has a very strong sense of place - of Gothenburg. Later when we discussed about where she would like to live, she liked the prospect of moving back to the town she originates from and she showed little interest on moving too far away from West Coast, even less to move to live on a foreign country.

That evoked the idea of rootedness which Tuan has discussed in an article about rootedness and sense of place: we cannot take thoughtful and deliberate steps to maintain a state of rootedness, whereas a sense of place can indeed be achieved and created. Having a sense of place is according to him, to be able to appreciate the place from which you have a certain distance (Tuan, 1980). Julia has the distance to her home-place right now, as she is living in Skåne, but she mentioned later that her ties to Gothenburg were even stronger when she was some years younger, so it might be said that she has a very strong sense of her home-place or rather that she is deeply rooted to Gothenburg. That is quite an uncommon result of the interview, which I did not expect, as many authors refer to the idea of 'up-rooted' or 'mobile' man in nowadays and I did not find an example of so strong ties to the home-place in any of these articles (Relph, 1976; Gustafson 2001; Tuan 1980).

Monika, Lena and Liina: people, not location makes home?

Lena, Liina and Monika all articulated the importance of people when they were thinking about home. It was more important for them to have the right people to surround them than the actual location and environment where they were living; this could be explained with the following thought from Relph. People create places: '...a place is relatively its people and that appearance or landscape is little more than a backdrop of relatively trivial importance.' He has also said that many people tend to feel at home wherever they are, as long as they are with people who have similar interests, regardless the exact place they are dwelling. (Relph 1976)

This is exactly what these respondents told me. Lena said that she felt home if she got along with the people where she was living with, it did not matter where she was. Monika was even more extreme, she said that she would not care if her home-house would burn down, as long as she still has her family, she considers herself to have home. Liina told that her parents and brother are very important for her and they create the feeling of home, she does not care about the actual location so much.

When I thought about what Monika, Lena and Liina said about that people are important for creating the feeling of home, it reminded me the first year which I spent in Sweden. Of course my parents are important to define my childhood home, but when I moved to Sweden for my exchange year, I lived in a dormitory called Östra in Alnarp. I felt home quite instantly, because the other people living there were foreigners as well and their way of thinking was similar to mine, moreover we shared the same experience of being in a foreign country. This

year I did not have these people to share my experiences with and I have felt quite much as an alien sometimes, because being the only foreigner in the house makes you feel like out of place. It was the first time when I started to think about where I come from, for the reason that I felt alone and a bit uprooted. Last year it was a continuous multicultural experience with likeminded people and therefore it felt like home.

Monika: outdoors environment as something special what affected her choice of profession?

Monika said that she was always very interested in the outdoor environment – she expressed that she remembers the gardens of the houses she has been living in. When she was drawing pictures at the time when she was little, it was always about nature. She is still very fond of nature and she thinks that is why she is studying landscape architecture. That could be related to what Cobb's study says about creative people, claiming that they always had some special connection to natural environment when they were little and that it has worked as a major source of inspiration later in their profession (Cobb, 1977).

Another aspect why the importance of natural interest of environment is interesting, is that usually children remember the memories which connected to the outdoors environment the best and it has been stated in studies that the most significant memories are usually connected with those which took place outdoors (Sebba, 1991).

Although Julia uttered the importance of the elements of her home landscape too, it was not so much connected to the outdoors experiences than with her attempt to identify herself with the landscape she grew up in and that is something what she thought was important for her as landscape architect. Julia said that she always had liked to have a lot of trees and rocks in her designs; she is not so fond of the open landscape of Skåne.

Johan: emotional 'home', not a location as 'home'?

As Johan described his journey between his childhood homes – mom's and dad's home – and later also moving between many different locations of home, it reminded me the theory of Relph, which said that places of childhood act as vital reference points in the later life and having roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world (Relph, 1976). In Johan's case it could be interpreted in a way, that he might not need a physical place to define as 'home', because his parents have managed to create for him a secure and homely environment wherever he was spending his time. He had 'the secure point from which to look out on the world' without the geographical location, because the feelings and smells created strong enough 'reference points' that he does not feel 'homeless' even right now, as one might consider this case, according to his story at the first glance.

When Johan was discussing the 'home' concept and he stated that this was difficult for him to define, since he has moved a lot and that has resulted in the fact that he really does not know from which place he actually is 'from': he has not really lived so much in the town where he was born and the other places where he was living, he was not really a native dweller.

This statement by him reminded me of my own situation, as I am from an island Hiiumaa but I moved away from there to the continental part of Estonia to Tartu. I cannot really say that I am from Tartu, or that I am from Hiiumaa and I am an islander. The reason is that the islanders have a very strong sense of roots and being genuinely from that island. I moved away and I pretty much do not belong there consequently. The result of not living there my whole life is that I cannot be the islander according to the real 'islanders'. And I do not feel like being from Tartu either.

Monika expressed the same thoughts about her identity - whether she is Polish or Canadian – she mostly says that she is a Polish from Canada, nevertheless when she happens to be abroad she does not feel Polish enough. She always feels like being something in-between.

Moya: strong cultural differences help to define what is 'not home'.

Moya is from a place which is distant geographically as well as culturally. Her way of defining home was to explain me what is so much different in Sweden compared to China, that it simply could not make her feel like home. She was giving examples of many aspects of life, which are different here, than it would be in Beijing. The list of the differences included things like: language, amount of people on streets, different food, higher prices and many other everyday situations. It is easier to reflect upon something, when one has some distance, as distance is needed to appreciate a place for what it is (Tuan, 1980).

When thinking about Moya's answer to what creates 'home', there are some things what she mentioned what I can relate to. Prices of food and other products might not seem to be so important at the first glance, but as I have also studied in Sweden for almost two years, at first, all these everyday situations seem minor. Because deep inside, I knew that I am going back and that it is all just temporary. But after a while, when I had stayed longer, then I started to understand that I actually do miss sometimes my own food – which is not as different as Chinese food from Swedish food, but still. And the more you stay somewhere as a foreigner, the more you start to realize your special situation. For Moya, being not able to afford drinking beer with friends has turned into something what prevents her to interact on the same social and cultural level as she was used to back at home.

And I do miss speaking and listening Estonian too, as English and Swedish as well as any Germanic language are so much more different from Estonian by their basic structure, sound and the way you can 'play around' with words sometimes. And considered that Moya is from China, which also includes the difference between the western and eastern culture – she must really feel a big gap between herself and the other people she is communicating with. She did admit that sometimes it is hard to even understand basic jokes what people tell to each other, as she does not have any reference point or context to hold on to.

One very interesting thought that Moya expressed was that she is not able to 'steal' jokes or good stories in busses and other public places, and that made me realized why I feel so isolated in Sweden as well. It is just an everyday situation, which one starts to miss only when she is not able to enjoy it anymore. I have friends here, but when I am not talking specifically

with them, it almost feels like I am invisible. All the other information and communication is just running past me.

Relationship between 'Home' and Attachment and 'Home' and Mobility

When I had finished discussing what 'home' means for these six young people I also wanted to briefly discuss the level of attachment they have to their homes and compare it with their experiences of other places they have visited and travelled to. This was due to the fact that many authors have referred to the nowadays people as a mobile one (Relph, 1976; Tuan 1978; Tuan 1980; Gustafson 2002). Therefore it seemed to be an important topic to look into in order to see how it affects their preference of landscape in general.

Attachment

Attachment is a complex theme to discuss as many of the interviewees were not sure about how much or to which 'home' place they were attached the most. Affective relations with family members and other important people of their lives were stressed much more, than any certain physical location. Some of the interviewees expressed after having some more time to think about it that – yes, they felt the biggest attachment to their home-house where they had spent the majority of their childhood, which relates back to what Relph wrote in an article: 'the feeling that this certain place has endured and will persist as a distinctive entity even though the world around may change' (Relph, 1976), that actual feeling is a result of a growing attachment. Thus it can be said that time creates bonds.

Younger interviewees stated more often that attachment is not so important to them, as they rather look for new experiences than a stable place to stay. Only Julia expressed a strong affective bond and attachment to her home and could really see herself moving back there to live and that might be for the reason that the sense of permanence creates the sense of stability and that in turn is creating a sense of place, but furthermore stability creates rootedness and therefore also attachment to a place (Tuan, 1980).

While discussing 'attachment' more specifically – I conducted questionnaires beforehand of the interviews. Now I will examine these answers more thoroughly: in the questionnaire I asked what are the first five things what the respondents do when they move into a new apartment or house.

The reason why I asked this question – name five things what you do when you move into a new apartment – was that I thought that these things might be connected to getting attached or creating a feeling of home subconsciously. It was interesting to see if people have any common ways of acting in this situation and how they explained later their answers, as their answers were connected with how they handle the new situation they were put into, as it turned out in the conversation.

Table nr 3: Name five things what you do when you move in to a new apartment.

	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6
1	check the phone book	unpack things	clean	take my shoes off	put carpets on the floor	look around to see if there is anybody I know
2	look outside	having a shower	pull out carpets	brew some tea	buy some plants	figure out where the washroom is
3	unpack my things	changing the bed sheets	put up furniture and things on the walls	change clothes to comfortable ones	put up photos of family members	take off my shoes
4	savour the moment	putting personal belongings on the wall, table, etc.	shopping for food and plants	look around the house/ apartment	mess up everything	-----
5	tell people that I am there	open computer, check the internet if possible	get the phone or internet working	have a nap	apply internet connection	-----

Subject nr 1:

Lena told that she checks the phone book to find valuable information about the town or city she moved into (where is the doctor, where are the shops, etc). Then she would look outside the window to see the view which opens from the window in order to understand the place she is better, and then she would unpack her things. After that she takes time to savour the moment and then she would contact her friends and family and let them know that she is safely there.

Subject nr 2:

Liina would first unpack her suitcases and then she would have a shower. Having a shower is for her a conscious ritual: ‘to recover from the shock what the moving to a new place creates. It has just so soothing effect and calms me down – then it is easier to confront all the new situations which are about to come.’ After that she would arrange her bed with fresh bed sheets: ‘because otherwise the bed does not feel like mine.’ The last thing would be putting up personal items like pictures and photos in the room and then getting connected to internet.

Subject nr 3:

Julia would firstly clean the room, and then pull out the carpets. After that she would put up the furniture and other belongings. Then she would go shopping for food and some plants and finally she would get connected to the internet.

Subject nr 4:

As Johan told – at first when he moves into a new place, he feels that everything is just spinning around still and all the boxes on the floor seem like flying. In order to make himself relax and stop the stirring feeling, he would take off the shoes, brew some tea and change into more comfortable clothes. After that he would look around in the apartment and then – in order to be able to take it all in, he would have a nap. After this ritual is performed, he would be able to start unpacking the things.

Subject nr 5:

Moya has similar way as Julia of getting used to a new place – she would pull out the carpets, buy some plants and then put up the photos of family members. After most of the things are settled, she would mess up her room, because otherwise it would not feel like her room – her room is always a bit messy, so that it would feel comfortable. And the last thing would be – which was also the most common aspect to be named by the others – applying the internet connection.

Subject nr 6:

Monika was really brief in her way of describing, what are the first things she does when she moves into a new place. She said: taking off the shoes, finding out if there is somebody she knows from before, and then figuring out where the washroom is. That is about it for her, because all the places feel so temporary right now, where she lives, that she does not feel like putting more effort into the moving-in ritual. She rarely unpacks her things.

When looking at the table and the explanations by the Subjects - the answers of the table could be divided into three major groups.

- The actions taken to make the place feel like his or hers (rituals)
- Realizing the change and grasp the moment (absorbing)
- Getting connected to the outside (sharing)

Table nr 4: The five things what people do divided by into the three groups

	Rituals	Absorbing	Sharing
Subject 1	unpack my things + check phone book	look outside + savour the moment	tell the people that I am there
Subject 2	unpack things + having a shower + changing the bed	-----	opening the computer, checking internet if possible

	linen + putting personal belongings on the wall, table, toilet, shower room		
Subject 3	clean + pull out the carpets + put up the furniture + shopping for food and plants	-----	get the phone or internet connection working
Subject 4	take my shoes off + brew some tea + change clothes to comfortable ones + have a nap	look around in the house/apartment	-----
Subject 5	put carpets on the floor + buying plants + put photos of family members up + mess up everything	-----	apply internet connection
Subject 6	take my shoes off + figure out where the washroom is	-----	look around if there is somebody in the room I know

As it can be seen from the table, there are certain kinds of different rituals performed to help a person make the room feel like her own. In the deeper level of consciousness it could be said that people have had different rituals all through the history to create places by speech, actions and by giving them name (Tuan, 1980). On a more practical everyday level, creating and controlling the environment by such actions like cleaning and redecorating one's home can be seen as a possession ritual which helps to make a new home truly ours. (McCracken, 1988; Saile, 1985; stated in Belk 1992)

The absorbing and sharing I would explain by the thought what came up during one of the interviews in the discussion with Lena: first one needs to look into her and reflect upon the new situation. After the information and surrounding has been worked through and absorbed, she can look to the outside to the world and share the experience by getting connected to family and friends.

Travelling

What interested me when I asked about travelling was that of in the light of place experience – and especially the ‘home-place’ experience – what the relationships between these concepts were for the six interviewees? And most of all – was there any pattern of preference in any of these descriptions?

I had questions about the positive and negative aspects of travelling in my written questionnaire. I asked the interviewees to write down the most important aspects which come in their mind as positive and negative when they think about travelling. The aim of these two

questions was to see how people perceive travelling as such - how positively or negatively and to which aspects they turn most attention to. The answers were as follows:

Table nr 4: The positive aspects of travelling

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6
meeting new people	new interesting environment	the food	meeting new people	to explore the unknown environment	see new things
seeing new things	international communication	the culture	experiencing other cultures	experience different culture	experience a new culture (people's unique lifestyle)
smell the air	pushing boundaries	the architecture	experiencing history of other places	to be isolated	experience new flavours (food)
experience	new places are refreshing - better understanding of myself	the colours	experiencing other environments	reach the places you read from books/TV/media	not burdened by things (live out of one bag)
grow	creates better understanding of the place I come from	the language	to be able to get home again	create yourself	live without a schedule

I can sum it up in the following way: the positive aspects of travelling included things like:

- New experiences of other cultures
- The possibility to explore different environment
- New sensory experiences (smells, colours, impulses)
- A possibility to discover and evolve one's persona

New experiences of culture like food, language and people are very common feature which I expected to see in the list. Exploration of different environment and the new sensory experiences could be connected to the fact that these six young people are all landscape architecture students. The exploration of a new environment included things like architectural differences of places and trying to understand the various processes behind the surface with the aim of understanding why certain places are developed or designed the way they were. The sensory experience of place could be connected to the fact they are looking for constant inspiration for their creative work in all the places they go.

The last, but very interesting aspect which everybody mentioned was the self-growth and self-discovery aspect of travelling – it is obviously important for these people to be able to think outside the box, which is a very necessary skill in our profession.

Table nr 5: The negative aspects of travelling

Subject nr 1	Subject nr 2	Subject nr3	Subject nr 4	Subject nr 5	Subject nr6
new impulses – sometimes too many at once, but you adapt	getting used to new conditions can be hard in the beginning	you have to live in a hotel room you do not know	the cultural collision in some cases	spends a lot of money	you are one in a million tourists (you are not original)
the time it takes – travelling by plane gets tiring	communication barrier with locals	you do not know how to find things	eventual language barriers	security	it is very easy to get lost
other people – you do not always choose your travel companions	it is hard to get a job if I am running out of money	you do not understand everything	it always costs more than you planned for	visa application	often difficult to communicate with locals
prices and foods – I am an conventional food eater	missing closest people	new things to eat	you experience your own misconceptions and flaws, can be annoying	cultural differences	poor weather conditions influences your perception of place
reality catching up with you – time to move on	feeling lonely sometimes		you have to go home sooner than you would have liked to	-----	thieves (pick pockets, scam artists, gypsies.)

The negative aspects of travelling could be divided to these main groups:

- Practical matters what one encounters in a different environment (money, visa, getting lost, thieves)
- Cultural differences (food, languages, communication)
- Negative experiences of surrounding conditions (getting along with others, communication barriers, bad weather conditions is connected to perception of places)
- Understanding your own negative or uncomfortable feelings (loneliness, understanding your flaws, feeling lost, getting used to new situations)

It seemed that most of the negative aspects listed, were connected to practical matters, travel conditions and cultural differences, which are the common things what one encounters when being abroad. More interestingly, the understanding of one's flaws and negative feelings was also listed. That could be connected to the fact that these young people really like to experience places not only take a touristic trip somewhere abroad.

Looking carefully at these two tables – the positive and negative aspects can be mostly connected as being the two sides of the same coin.

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
new experiences of other cultures	cultural differences
the possibility to explore different environment	practical matters what one encounters in a different environment
new sensory experiences	negative experiences of surrounding conditions
a possibility to discover and evolve one's persona	Understanding your own negative or uncomfortable feelings

These tables give a general idea what was the first thing that came into the interviewees mind instantly when thinking on travelling. The deeper opinion on the importance of travelling for an individual followed during the interviews which can be seen above under the 'Interview Interpretations' heading.

General reflections regarding relationship between 'Home' and Attachment and 'Home' and Travelling

For the most of the respondents it took time to think about and reflect upon attachment and mobility, but in general they all said that they felt the strongest connection to their home where they spent most of their childhood. All the interviewees had been living in different places and all of them had the experience of moving away from home when starting University or starting to explore the world by themselves for other reasons.

Travelling was mostly seen as vital for personal growth and getting new experiences of places and of the self. All the interviewees said that they enjoy travelling; only Julia stated that it takes some effort for her to push herself to do that as it feels sometimes tiring as it consists of constantly changing situations and she prefers more stability.

Not all the interviewees had been living abroad; they had the experience of foreign countries only from different trips they had taken. The ones who had been living in a foreign country (Lena, Liina, Moya, Monika), usually did not express any strong emotions connected to homesickness except been worried about their family members sometimes.

Julia: Childhood home as medium of attachment?

Only one interviewee – Julia – expressed that she feels strong attachment to her home in Gothenburg and she was not so interested in being a mobile person. Julia said that she enjoys stability and as travelling means constant changes, she feels that travelling is a bit of pushing boundaries for her. Like it has been expressed many times before – Julia was the most exceptional example as she had the strongest attachment to home and she was very sure about her standing points. She also expressed the thought that Swedish landscape is always more beautiful to her than any other place she has been to and she always prefers that to anything else. I could not explain in any other way her point of view, than – as mentioned above

already - she really might be rooted to her home place, home landscape and home country. So clearly, there was no dilemma for her between staying in one place, or preferring travelling instead. The home proved to be her castle. All the other interviewees did express their desire to travel and discover new places, just in the different extent.

Lena: Traveller by heart, but looking for stable ground?

Lena remembers her childhood home in Stockholm with warm feelings and attachment. She has been travelling around a lot ever since and right now she would like to find more stable place to stay but still keep travelling every now and then, as she would have a certain place to return to. People are said to want roots and struggle for them, and at the same time trying to maintain the balance between the feeling of being tied down to a place or feeling imprisoned by them (Relph, 1976; Gustafson 2002) and Lena found for herself the solution of being traveller by heart. As she feels that she would like to find a more permanent place to stay but still keep travelling, the option of doing that through books, music and other means might be the solution for her. I think that Lena has probably found her way to keep the balance between mobility and attachment.

Liina: Mobility more desirable than attachment?

Liina felt that her childhood home was just a place she grew up and was living until going to University. She said that for her it is right now important to keep moving and seeing the world around, as she has been living in one small town for eighteen years and feels a bit suffocated there.

Sometimes it takes time in our everyday lives to realize that we have deep ties to our home-places (Relph, 1976). Liina expressed the same idea during the interview, as she said that she might understand and enjoy the places she has been more after some time has passed – right now she does not feel reflective about her place experiences, because she would like to experience more new environments. She said that she might appreciate her home as well more, when she has been away for some time and creates the distance to realize it.

Liina feels ties to her hometown, which she does not consider the best place to live but where she spent her childhood. That relates to back to the thought that children create bonds to their home no matter how low status or unpleasant the environment seems to be to an outsider (Olwig, 1991).

Moya: Understanding the cultural heritage of her home and other places?

Moya felt attachment to one special place where she lived during her childhood – her Grandmother's house. Since all the other places where she has been living were just boring concrete buildings, but this special house was a traditional Chinese house with a small courtyard with some fruit trees. That does prove that modern city planning creates places which are the product of engineering and lack the ability to create and maintain the sense of place (Olwig, 1991) whereas the traditional house of her Grandmother's was different and is reflected in her childhood memories more vividly than any other place of that time.

When talking about travelling, Moya said that she does enjoy it, just the practical problems like the cost of travelling and applying for visas can be troublesome. Right now she is trying to use her European visa as much as possible to see all these places which she has only seen from TV and books before. The possibility to travel has given her the chance to realize many processes which lie behind the images of places. She gave the example of Europe being so much different from USA, which she did not realize before, as she thought that these two both represent the Western world and are the same.

Johan: Roots defining attachment and giving a stable ground for discoveries?

Johan said that he is really not attached to any location and he can be wherever, as long as he has his parents, since they act as stable ‘footings’ for him. Still, he would like to find his stable place to stay before his parents pass away; otherwise he might have problems anchoring himself anywhere as the feeling of stability provided by his parents would be gone. That thought that he expressed, made me think that modern person has been considered as homeless according to some theorists, but there must be other means of attachment than total rootedness or uprootedness (Relph, 1976) and in Johan’s case his mean of creating attachment could be the existence of his parents who have given him complex but stable roots.

Johan also told that he likes to discover different places, but only with the knowing that he has a safe place to return and as long as he has his parents he always has that place. His story referred back to what Lena said – they are both looking for their safe bases, from where to go and discover the world and to be able to come back after some time. What is more interesting – they both said that the actual location of that returning point is not important, as long as it exists. Both of them are young and open minded people and it seems that they get easily rooted to whatever place as long as the landscape is similar to one they are used to or they are living with likeminded people (Relph, 1976)

Monika: Portable attachment to take where she goes – memories?

Monika expressed fond and deep feelings against her Grandmother’s farm in Poland, but at present time most of the place has been demolished and is gone. She felt sadness when returning there after a long time and discovering it. Returning to the landscape of childhood has been said to be a very emotional experience, even more when one finds out that some things have been severely changed or are even gone, that is because people are holding on to their childhood places as a mental anchor to remind them who they were and where they came from – these memories remain whatever happens to us later (Cooper-Marcus, 1992).

As for Monika, she has created a portable attachment for herself in memories; she is interested in investigating the world more and seeing new sites and places. She also stated that she is so young that in her current phase of life, it is not important for her to have roots in one certain place. That is very similar to what Liina and Moya also said – they too said that in their age it is more important to wander around than stay put in one place.

Summary

In general – what can be seen from these reflections above is that ‘home’ was stated to be the place where the respondents had spent most of their time living during the childhood. The concept ‘home’ also consisted of people, objects, opportunity for privacy and so on, but what interested me and what I also found in the answers, was that landscape was important as well to define ‘home’ for these people.

I got answers to some of the questions which I was trying to investigate:

- Do the respondents consider their home as a special place with which they compare places later in their lives?

The interviewees carried the image of their childhood home landscape with them to the places they moved to later in their life. Many of the respondents compared the landscape they were living in right now with their childhood landscape in order to define home.

- Do they tend to prefer landscapes which are similar to their childhood landscape?

In the end of the interview, when I asked about the preference of landscape or home environment, most of the preferences expressed were connected to their childhood environment. They preferred similar type of landscape and even similar kind of urban or rural situation where they grew up. The ones who grew up in the countryside could see themselves living in the countryside and the ones who grew up in the city preferred city as the living environment.

- Do they consider themselves mobile persons or attached to one certain place?

Most of the subjects, with the exception of Julia, did consider themselves mobile. The degree of the mobility varied between people. Younger subjects regarded it as very vital, whilst the ones who were situated to the other end of the age group could see themselves calming down and finding a place to call home, but nevertheless they did as well express the importance of travelling for the reasons of personal growth and being open-minded.

- And the ultimate question, which I regarded as the hardest one: Do they believe that grass is greener on the other side?

Most of the respondents did not agree with the assumption that somewhere else might be better than they currently are. Only Liina said that she thinks that the grass is greener on the other side and that very idea makes her restless and not being able to stay in one certain place in current life phase. Everything undiscovered seemed so alluring to her and that is understandable knowing the fact that she lived 18 years at the same town and she said that she is curious by nature.

From the information gathered and analyzed it can be said ‘home’ is a difficult concept to define and the actual ‘home-house’ and attachment might not be always connected. Still,

having a place to return - which might not be the 'home' – was important for the respondents to be able to travel and experience the world. Attachment was mostly connected to stable and secure ground which gives an opportunity to reflect upon the new experiences gathered from other places.

Johan and Lena were more moderate on their idea on travelling – they still needed to have a certain ground to return to. Monika, Liina and Moya were all about mobility and new places. They all expressed the same thought with different words: while they are young they want to move around and not to be tied down to any place. Travelling was seen as a source for inspiration, personal growth and the chance to get out of the everyday routine.

During the interviews some of the subjects also stated the importance of their different place experiences to affect their way of working as landscape architects. The importance of nature and good living conditions were expressed many times as well as sometimes criticising their childhood home environment if something was wrong with it. Some examples of that:

Liina said that she did not like her hometown as a living environment and now she knows some mistakes which to avoid when working with residential area planning. Julia said that she always likes to add trees to her design as she is used to see forest in the landscape during her childhood. Moya articulated the importance of urban greenery, as opposed to the boring concrete apartment housing areas where she was mostly living.

And the last provocative question what I had in my mind personally: Did any of these landscape architect students mention 'genius loci' in order to explain why certain places were more significant and special for them during their lives? No, not really. Many other aspects like people, culture, nature and inspiration for instance were indeed mentioned. Maybe some theories work in the theoretical world, whilst people in the actual world consider other aspects of places important to make them special and loved. Even from a young landscape architect point of view.

The biggest inspiration to me is the final thought that some places might have 'spirits' and 'genius loci' to define them, but as landscape architect I should never forget the fact that human-mind is complex, therefore also the places the human constructs is complex - mentally and in the reality.

Critical Reflections on my work and Ideas for Future Studies

When I started collecting data for this paper, it was very hard to concentrate on one certain direction of study for the reason that there is so much various interesting literature about it and it was rather difficult for me to choose the proper method for my studies as well. Questionnaires seemed to be less time consuming while the interviews seemed to be more flexible in their nature and the questions could be discussed more thoroughly.

I chose interviews in the end and I got a lot of information concerning the topics in which I was interested in. However the amount of information proved to become an obstacle as well when I started writing the reflections – that was due to the fact that it was rather hard to concentrate on the essential parts for my work. Probably my interviews were a bit too widespread since I felt that I need to know everything what could concern my work. Hence I ended up with a bunch of information, which proved to be irrelevant from the point of my thesis, but valuable for another perspective of the same topic, perhaps.

I assume that my questions were a bit too open, because I was afraid of leading the interviewees in the desired direction too much. Another aspect what I encountered during my reflections was, that some of the answers which I got were very interesting; nevertheless I had no idea how to explain these results. The possible explanations for these could lie most likely in other disciplines like psychology and cognitive sciences for instance, in which I have no experiences. That proves, once again the complexity of the theme of my paper.

During the time when I was writing my paper I got many ideas about what could be investigated deeper. The question about home, attachment and mobility has many different layers to examine further: cultural, social, psychological, philosophical. Many issues regarding place perception could be connected more deeply to psychology, more specifically to environmental psychology. Clearly I was not able to cover all these fields with my work for this paper. Even though I tried to get as varied knowledge about these issues from literature, I was not entirely sure about my ability to interpret all this information in an objective and just way. This is the reason why I had a rather focused approach when I was writing my reflections.

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Appendix (Questionnaire answers)

Subject 1:

Name: Lena

Age: 36

What country are you from (home country and town): Sweden, Huddinge

- Did you grow up in your place of birth? Yes

.....

- **Please name five things what creates 'home' for you:**
 - Safety
 - Sea
 - Airport
 - Warmth
 - Air

- **Please name places where you have been travelling:**
 Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, England, Ireland, US, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Estonia, Holland,

- **If you move to a new location – what are the first 5 things you do when you enter a new apartment/house, in order to make yourself to feel at home?**
 - check phone book
 - look outside
 - unpack my things
 - savour the moment
 - tell people that I am there

- **Please name five things what are positive about travelling?**
 - meeting new people
 - seeing new things
 - Experience
 - smell the air
 - grow

- **Please name five things what are negative about travelling?**
 - New impulses – sometimes too many at once but you adapt
 - The time it takes – travelling by plane gets tiring
 - Other people – you don't always choose your travel companions
 - Prices and foods – I am a conventional food eater
 - Reality catching up with you – time to move on!

Subject 2:

Name: Liina

Age: 24

What country are you from (home country and town): Estonia, Jõgeva

- Did you grow up in your place of birth? Yes

.....

- **Please name five things what creates 'home' for you:**
 - People
 - comfort
 - memories
 - pleasurable
 - esthetical environment

- **Please name places where you have been travelling:**
 Turkey, Germany, Russia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Greece, France, Belgium, Norway.

- **If you move to a new location – what are the first 5 things you do when you enter a new apartment/house, in order to make yourself to feel at home?**
 - unpack things
 - having a shower
 - changing the bed linen
 - putting personal belongings on the wall, table, toilet, shower room
 - opening the computer, checking internet if there is the opportunity

- **Please name five things what are positive about travelling?**
 - new interesting environment
 - international communication
 - pushing boundaries
 - new place is refreshing, better understanding of myself – discovering new sides in myself
 - living abroad on the other country for a while creates a better understanding of the place where I come from.

- **Please name five things what are negative about travelling?**
 - getting used to new conditions can be hard in the beginning
 - communication barrier with locals
 - it is hard to get a job if I am running out of money
 - missing closest people
 - feeling lonely sometimes

Subject 3:

Name: Julia

Age: 26

What country are you from (home country and town): Sweden, Göteborg

- Did you grow up in your place of birth? Yes

.....

- **Please name five things what creates 'home' for you:**
 - Family
 - Rocks
 - Sea
 - Forest
 - Westcoast

- **Please name places where you have been travelling:**
 Japan, France, Denmark, Norway, Holland,
 Stockholm, Dalarna, Dalsland, Öland

- **If you move to a new location – what are the first 5 things you do when you enter a new apartment/house, in order to make yourself to feel at home?**
 - clean
 - pull out carpets
 - put up furniture and things on the walls
 - shopping food for the fridge and plants
 - get the phone or internet working

- **Please name five things what are positive about travelling?**
 - the food
 - the culture
 - Architecture
 - The colours
 - The language

- **Please name five things what are negative about travelling?**
 - you have to live in a hotel room that you do not know
 - you do not know how to find things
 - you do not understand everything
 - new things to eat
 - ...

Subject 4:

Name: Johan

Age: 27

What country are you from (home country and town): Sweden, Borås and Varberg

- Did you grow up in your place of birth? No

.....

- **Please name five things what creates 'home' for you:**
 - the smell of home
 - that feeling you get when you have been away for a long time and get back home
 - the smells of home
 - the hammock
 - the tea kettle

- **Please name places where you have been travelling:**
Egypt, Switzerland, Holland, UK, The Canary Islands, Norway, Estonia, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium

- **If you move to a new location – what are the first 5 things you do when you enter a new apartment/house, in order to make yourself to feel at home?**
 - take my shoes off
 - brew some tea
 - change clothes to comfortable ones
 - look around in the house/apartment
 - have a nap

- **Please name five things what are positive about travelling?**
 - meeting new people
 - experiencing other cultures
 - experiencing history of other places
 - experiencing new environments
 - to be able to get home again

- **Please name five things what are negative about travelling?**
 - the cultural collision in some cases
 - eventual language barriers
 - it always costs more than you planned for
 - you experience your own misconceptions and flaws, can be annoying
 - you have to go home sooner than you would have liked

Subject 5:

Name: Moya

Age: 26

What country are you from (home country and town): China, Beijing

- Did you grow up in your place of birth? Yes

.....

- **Please name five things what creates 'home' for you:**
 - my bed
 - family members
 - friends
 - speaking Chinese
 - cheap beer

- **Please name places where you have been travelling:**
China, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Holland

- **If you move to a new location – what are the first 5 things you do when you enter a new apartment/house, in order to make yourself to feel at home?**
 - carpets
 - plants
 - photos of family members
 - mess up everything
 - apply internet connection

- **Please name five things what are positive about travelling?**
 - to explore the unknown environment
 - experience different culture
 - to be isolated
 - reach the places you read from books/TV/media...
 - create yourself

- **Please name five things what are negative about travelling?**
 - spends a lot of money
 - Security
 - Visa application
 - culture differences
 - ...

Subject 6:

Name: Monika

Age: 21

What country are you from (home country and town): Mississauga, Canada

- Did you grow up in your place of birth? No

.....

- **Please name the five things that create ‘home’ for you:**

- people
- memories
- -gardens
- ... really, that's it
- -

- **Please name places where you have been travelling:**

10 European countries, central and eastern Canada, the United States, Mexico

- **If you move to a new location – what are the first 5 things you do when you enter a new apartment/house, in order to make yourself to feel at home?**

- look around to see: if there is someone in the room i know
- figure out where the washroom is
- take off my shoes (unless it is a student house that is really dirty)
-

- **Please name five things what are positive about travelling?**

- see new things
- experience new flavours (food)
- experience a new culture (peoples unique lifestyle)
- not burdened by things (live out of one bag)
- live without a schedule

- **Please name five things what are negative about travelling?**

- you are one of a million other tourists (you are not original)
- its very easy to get lost
- often difficult to communicate with locals
- poor weather influences your perception of a place
- thieves (pick pockets, scam artists, gypsies)