

Therapeutic Landscapes

A Natural Weaving of Culture and Health



Introduction

This research aims to understand a landscape architectural approach that can be applied to the creation of therapeutic landscapes that are both culturally and socially responsive.

Examples in literature and case studies tend to be one of two varieties. One being the 'extraordinary' spaces of healing; spiritual and emotional retreats. The other is the 'everyday' spaces of healing; places that would be used on an everyday basis by all members of the public. More recently, social tensions have widened the gap between the places of emotional retreat and healing from those of everyday sociability, leading to local cultural practices not being translated into environments that are part of the everyday realm.

Method

- Thematic literature review
- Case study surveys and analysis

Findings

Therapeutic landscapes can strengthen and improve the overall wellbeing of a community or population. Successful therapeutic landscapes will address the social and cultural context of their location and respond to the environmental, social, mental and physical needs of each user. What has been lacking from the modern everyday therapeutic landscapes is the inclusion of indigenous values and practices. If these are embedded within the design and the user engagement the environment will inherently respond to the needs of each individual user in a holistic sense and provide the foundation for a richer healthier lifestyle.

Public Space and Social Networks



Public spaces play a significant role in encouraging healthy lifestyles, and can benefit both physical and mental health. Successful public spaces are an inclusive environment that provide the opportunity for social engagement.

Sense of place



Sense of place is established within a therapeutic environment through the representation of place identity and the user's place attachment. This process is dependent on the intent of the user and their own personal experiences.

Indigenous methods of Healing



Most western healthscapes and community wellness methods have moved away from their origins of traditional practices, however over 80% of people in developing countries rely on traditional methods of healing.

Natural Landscape Engagement



Nature has inherent restorative and therapeutic qualities which can result in long term health and well-being. Large scale green and blue spaces welcome a change in scenery, fresh air and facilitate a range of physical activities that inherently improve your health and well-being.

Community Engagement



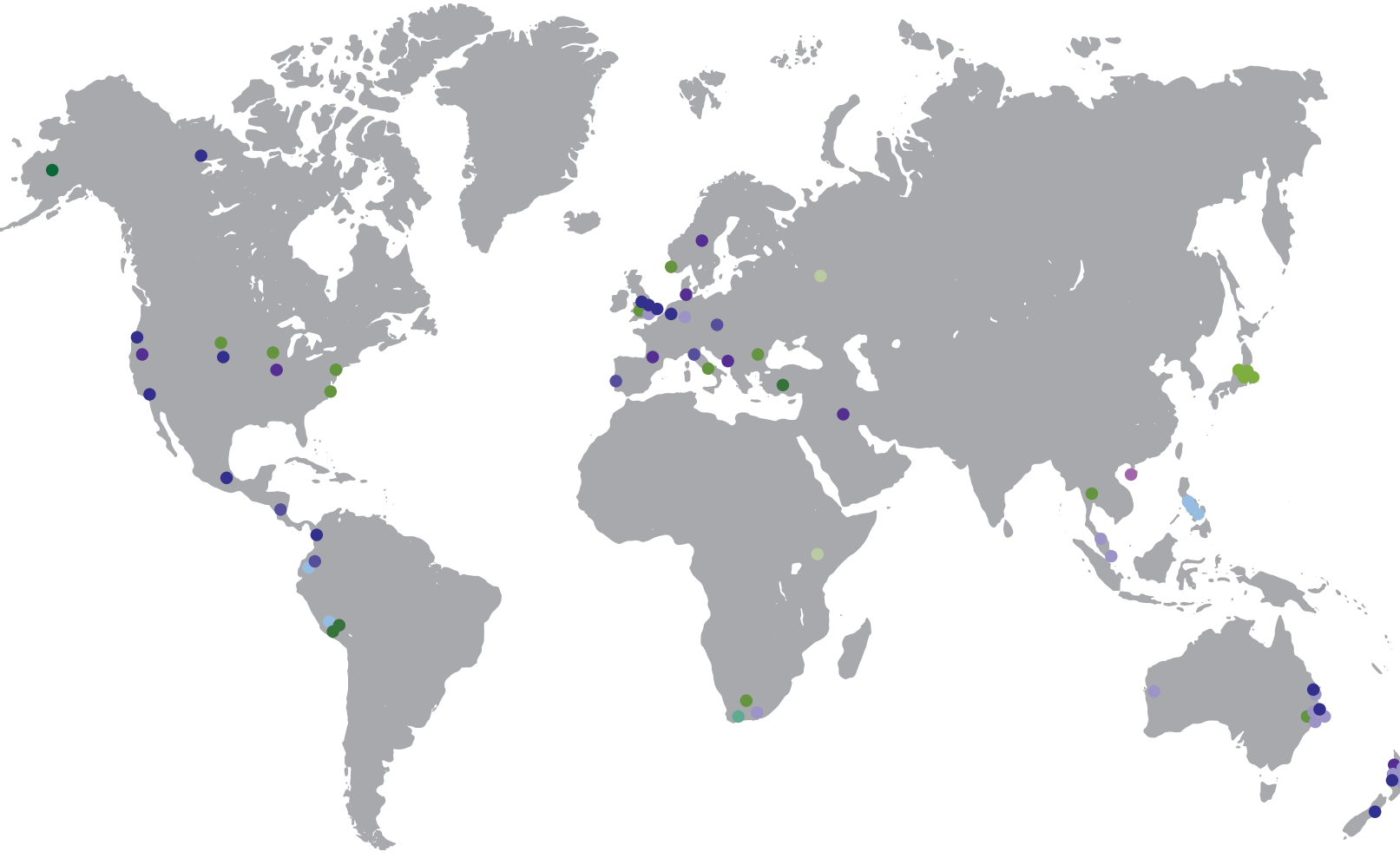
A participatory approach to therapeutic landscapes can be beneficial to the overall wellness and unity of a community. Therapeutic landscapes that have structured communal activities bring like-minded people together and can mitigate the feeling of isolation and loneliness.

Health and Wellbeing Disparities



Most healing gardens have been created for the marginalised groups, those with disabilities, mental illnesses, home care patients and elders. In these healing spaces there is a notable lack of diversity of users and cohesion between spaces.

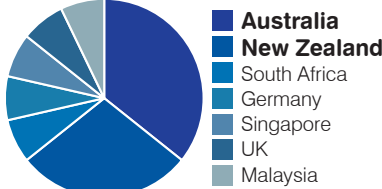
Case Studies



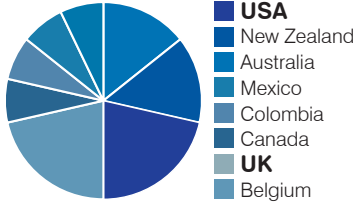
Key

- Botanical Garden
- Community Garden
- Urban Park
- Hospital Garden
- Sanctuary
- Sculptural Garden
- Treatment Facility
- Zen Garden
- Hot Spring
- National Park
- Commercial Garden
- Sacred Site
- Urban Playground

Urban Parks



Community Gardens



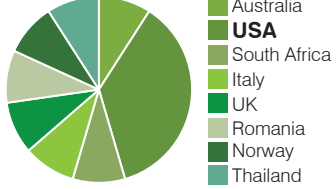
Therapeutic environments in the form of urban parks were most common in Australia and New Zealand. New Zealand and Australia had quite a wide spread of types of therapeutic environments compared to other countries that were looked at in the case study scope.

The theme that came through the case studies found in the UK is that most of them focus on the participatory approach that enables the therapeutic qualities of a designed space. Community gardens were more prevalent in the UK than any other country, followed closely by the USA. Community gardens enable a form of horticulture therapy and aid in physical and mental rehabilitation.

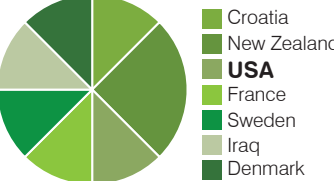
Out of the 71 case studies the vast majority of hospital gardens and treatment facilities were found in the USA. Discussion of therapeutic landscapes tends to be about the importance of green healing in healthcare environments. Through both the case studies and literature, it is clear that there has been a change in perspective of the current facilities and the associated treatment options, moving away from the enclosed clinical spaces to a more outdoor-focused rehabilitative landscape.

Examples such as outdoor gardens in these facilities, often have two purposes and are kept quite separate. There are areas for contemplation and solace, where families and patients can come together and detach from the sterile environment. There are also places of activation, which contain children's playgrounds, seating and amphitheatres.

Hospital Gardens



Treatment Facilities



The Freedom Park

South Africa

Urban Park



This park was mandated by Nelson Mandela in 1994 to communicate South Africa's journey to freedom and celebrate those who fought for its freedom. The Freedom Park demonstrates a series of therapeutic qualities that are sought after in a therapeutic environment. The park assists the new found identity of South Africa and attempts to create new social networks to support the once fractured society.

Jardín Etnobotánico de Oaxaca

Mexico

Ethnobotanical Garden



This garden was created as a passion project by local artists, horticulturists and scientists. The garden tells a strong narrative of the natural history of Mexico, it also explores cultural and artistic traditions of Oaxaca. Oaxaca has one of the most bio-diverse ecosystems, each section of the garden has been planted with natives that represent a particular area of the region. Including traditional food crops (that were domesticated locally) and medicinal plants.

Kopupaka Reserve

New Zealand

Urban Park



This urban park was created in collaboration with Mana Whenua and used the guidance of the Te Aranga Principles. Motifs have been included into the structural elements of the park that tell a story of the history of the area. This multidisciplinary urban park links together the surrounding suburbs. The strong place identity and the encouragement of physical activity create a successful therapeutic landscape and a strong sense of community.

Conclusions

This research brought to light the lack of discussion around the success of both socially and culturally responsive Therapeutic landscapes. There was a lack of engagement with the cultural context of the therapeutic landscapes and the inclusion of indigenous practices. More recent literature has discussed the need for indigenous culture to challenge western culture in regards to the design of our healing landscapes. Indigenous methods can provide a holistic approach to health and wellbeing in our communities.

The case studies that were explored were spaces that engaged willingly with the social and cultural context of their location and addressed pressing issues in the design of the environment. These case studies showed overlapping similarities that could be concluded to be qualities that create a successful and holistic therapeutic landscape. These include;

- Sense of place is strongly established in all case studies, this is not just in a cultural place identity sense but both socially and culturally. Social inclusion is also a clear trait between all spaces.

- A variety of spaces are provided in all of the case studies. Users are provided with the opportunity to either strengthen social networks and participate in recreational activities, or physical activities. Spaces of refuge for relaxation or contemplation are also included.

- Most of these spaces have come about as projects as a response to passion and demand from the local community or as a response to social/ cultural demands.

- Engagement with natural environment is at the forefront of the designed space/ therapeutic landscape. The design enables humans and nature to work harmoniously together.

- Indigenous and traditional practices and materials are also included within the design of these therapeutic landscapes. Documents like the Te Aranga Principles ensure that these are implemented tastefully and respectfully.