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Anime Landscapes as a Tool for Analyzing the Human–Environment Relationship: Hayao Miyazaki Films

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Received: 8 March 2018; Accepted: 13 April 2018; Published: 17 April 2018



Abstract: Common dualistic thinking in environmental design education adopts humans and the environment as separate entities, with the environment as raw material stock. This approach affects the intellectual development of landscape architects and limits their ability to create meaningful landscapes. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and highlight new ideas about the more integrated human–environment relationship. Through the films of Hayao Miyazaki, many audiences around the world have encountered a different worldview. By contrast with Western thinking, which adopts human superiority to nature, the worldview that Miyazaki reflects in his films depicts human as an inseparable part of nature. Being inspired by different communities and their relationship to nature in Miyazaki’s films, we propose using anime as a means of analyzing the human–environment relationship. We classified landscapes based on power relations between humans and nature. We explored how communities shape their physical environment based on how they socially construct nature and the resulting landscapes. Thus, through apocalyptic landscapes, the bitter results of exploiting nature were depicted. Wilderness landscapes reflect the bias humanity has about nature as wild and hostile. Responsible landscapes were introduced as a way of understanding the unbreakable bond between humans and the environment. Through these animated landscape types, the ways landscape architecture should approach nature in professional practices was discussed, and the importance of creating responsible landscapes was emphasized.

Keywords: human–environment relationship; Hayao Miyazaki; anime; landscape type; wilderness; apocalyptic; responsible; deep ecology

1. Introduction

Human–environment relations form the principal philosophical foundation for landscape architecture; therefore, exploring and highlighting how these ideas have influenced the development of modern landscape architecture is important. Within environmental design education, dualistic human–environment relations are common. Defined as common worldview or Western thinking, this approach originates predominantly in the Scientific Revolution. It is characterized by separation and division, and a view of nature as a machine or storehouse of materials for human activity. This approach adopts the human and the environment as separate entities in a power relationship in which human is superior to nature, and ignores the unbreakable bond between humans and the environment. This worldview is seen as the reason behind the ecological crises and disasters that humanity had caused. Perceived limitations in landscape architecture’s intellectual development, which affect its ability and impede the creation of meaningful landscapes, also result from this worldview (Thwaites and Simkins 2007). Moving beyond separate visions for the human and the environment is

seen as a prerequisite for responsible design. Thus, the need for an alternative worldview characterized by a more integrated conception of human–environment relations becomes apparent. Therefore, exploring and highlighting new ideas about the human–environment relationship is important and necessary. From where can we learn about alternative worldviews? What are the sources of different approaches that pave the way for a more holistic point of view? In their study of typologies of the human–nature relationship in different cultures, [Flint et al. \(2013\)](#) found that the notion of humans as separate from nature was mostly absent from the Japanese human–nature relationship. Rather, humans and nature are seen as inseparable and, in terms of hierarchical positions, the emphasis was often placed on a human reliance on nature and vulnerability to nature ([Flint et al. 2013](#)). Through anime landscapes, learning from Japanese culture about the inseparable human–environment relationship can contribute to highlighting a more holistic view of environmental design. Before explaining why anime can be an alternative tool for analyzing the human–environment relationship in detail, the concept of landscape must be discussed in order to disclose its relationship to anime.

1.1. Landscape

In the study of the human–environment relationship the concepts of environment, nature and landscape become intertwined. [Greider and Garkovich \(1994\)](#) define landscape as the symbolic environment created by a human act of conferring meaning on nature and the environment. Depending on the cultural context involved, symbols and meanings that define nature and the environment are constructed and, through these definitions, they transform their physical environments into landscapes ([Bigell and Chang 2014](#)). Many other explanations of landscape share this social-construction point of view yet try to expand it by emphasizing different dimensions of it. The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as “a zone or area as perceived by local people or visitors, whose visual features and character are the result of the action of natural and/or cultural (that is, human) factors. This definition reflects the idea that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings” ([Council of Europe 2004](#)). Parallel to this definition, [Bigell and Chang \(2014\)](#) define landscape as not a still image but an expression of historical and natural forces shaping the environment. [Saunders \(2013\)](#) admits that landscape possesses real physical qualities; however, constructions of it are mediated through social, cultural, economic and political processes.

These definitions show that natural and cultural forces can be defined as two components of changes in landscapes. How communities define their relationship to their environment is an important component of cultural forces. Cultural definitions that create landscapes are the key to identifying and understanding potential human consequences ([Greider and Garkovich 1994](#)). Based on this idea, we argue that the way communities construct nature and the differences in their worldview about their environment creates different landscapes. By analyzing different landscapes, understanding the approaches to environment and nature that create these landscapes can be possible. In so doing, landscape architects can achieve a deeper understanding of how humans define themselves in their environment and different ideas about the human–environment relationship. This study aims to propose a new and unconventional tool to analyze different approaches and landscapes as products. [Tschida \(2004\)](#) argues that understanding environmental narratives is an important part of understanding the relationship people have with their environment. It is through narratives that people share perspectives on the environment. The role that films and videos with environmental narratives play in the educational process is important because they reach a broader audience ([Mayumi et al. 2005](#)). We believe that environmental narratives are also useful for landscape architects, helping them to explore different worldviews from different cultures and enriching philosophical foundations. As mentioned above, humans as separate from nature were found to be mostly absent from the Japanese human–nature relationship. Because of this important difference from Western ideas of nature, anime, a Japanese cultural product, is proposed as a tool for analysis. We focused on the films of Hayao Miyazaki, the masterful animator.

1.2. *The Relationship between Landscape and Cinema (Anime)*

In films, landscapes establish a sense of time, place and mood; they serve to punctuate the narrative and invest it with a more varied rhythm; they can intensify the pictoriality of films; they can play on and manipulate the viewer's spatial consciousness; they act as visual analogies for complex psychologies of characters; they give meaning to cinematic events and position narratives within a particular scale and historical context (Dissanayake 2010; Lukinbeal 2005). Therefore, the role of landscape in films is central to the formation of cinematic space (Lukinbeal 2005). The landscape in films is generally seen as a provider of the requisite background. However, as mentioned above, in cinema the landscape performs numerous other functions that are more subtle and more complex, which adds greater meaning and significance to the film experience (Dissanayake 2010). While dealing with the relationship between film experience and cinematic space/landscape, Bruno (2002) suggests that film creates space for viewing, perusing, and wandering about. Through landscape, film permits the spectatorial body to take unexpected paths of exploration and the landscape offers itself for consumption, as traveled space that is available for further traveling. While traveling, a relation is established between places and events that forms and transforms the narrative (Bruno 2002). It was suggested that filmic landscapes themselves might be understood not just as passive backdrops or foregrounds of human activity but, through an understanding of an acting landscape, as an expression of life, as actors or workers in their own right, as a visual worker of the underlying themes, or as a director with its own active force, striving, and power (Curti 2008; Lukinbeal 2005).

As a kind of film, Curti (2008) points out the role of animation in challenging traditional beliefs and concepts of landscape through the richness of the imagination. Our active cognitive negotiation and visual exploration of the animated landscape foregrounds as an object of meaning within the realm of moving images (Pallant 2015). For animated landscapes, Pallant (2015) suggests that our depictions of landscape speak of our human relationship with our surroundings and, to a lesser extent, with nature. The depictions of an animated landscape are meaningful: not simply on account of saying things about the world, but crucially our relationship with it. According to Meades (2015), landscape paintings, animated landscapes, and videogame landscapes, each attempt to position the human (both as in humankind and as spectator) in relation to the landscape. Therefore, we suggest that through the human relationship with their surroundings, animated landscapes can be used for questioning the dualistic Western worldview and creating an ecological awareness for landscape architects. Drawing on similar arguments about these points from other studies (e.g., geography and cultural studies), we aim to expand this approach to include landscape architecture. Curti (2008) has discussed how anime's imagery, ideas, and philosophies can elucidate and aid in an understanding of a landscape as a relational living and endeavoring thing. Aitken (1991), with a transactional approach, has focused on the dynamics of person–environment relationships in filmic landscapes. Similarly, Aitken and Dixon (2006) aimed to push disciplinary boundaries for geography and film studies by discussing the roles of filmic landscape in detail, as either a medium, actor, work or doing work (Aitken and Dixon 2006). From architecture to geography and cultural studies, scholarly interest in filmic landscapes is becoming widespread, and the number of publications is steadily increasing. We believe that landscape architecture must be part of this research area, and that studies in landscape architecture about filmic landscapes should become one of the basic domains. Such insights about landscape architecture are especially needed to move beyond a traditional dualistic human–environment relationship and landscape approaches.

1.3. *What Is Anime?*

Anime is a Japanese popular culture phenomenon and has become a globally consumed cultural product. In 2002, for the first time, an anime, *Spirited Away*, won an Academy Award. Since then, the demand for anime has dramatically increased. The director of *Spirited Away*, Hayao Miyazaki, is accepted as anime's leading artist (Bigelow 2005). Anime, as a novel form of animation, reflects Japanese aesthetics, iconography and social norms (Tomos 2013) and builds on previous Japanese

traditional arts, such as Kabuki and the woodblock print. Anime also makes use of the worldwide artistic traditions of 20th-century cinema and photography (Napier 2001a). Anime represents a break from the Cartesian duality of Hollywood animation (Tomos 2013) and, with its complex storylines, anime challenges the viewer used to the predictability of Disney. Therefore, Napier (2001a) defines anime as a cinema of de-assurance rather than one of reassurance. Its difference from the Western mainstream is defined as a strong part of its appeal (Napier 2001a). Because of its popular reach, anime affects a wider variety of audiences, ranging from young children to college students and young adults, in more ways than some less-accessible types of high cultural exchange have been able to do (Napier 2001a). Thus, for Napier (2001a), anime appears to be a cultural phenomenon worthy of being taken seriously, both sociologically and aesthetically. With their more provocative, more tragic worlds, anime works move and provoke viewers, stimulating them to work through certain contemporary issues in ways that older art forms cannot (Napier 2001a). Stokrocki and Delahunt (2008) stated that anime can motivate discussion of major life issues, such as ecological sustainability. Yokohari and Bolthouse (2011) explained how the film *My Neighbor Totoro* played a powerful part in raising public concern about *Satoyama* landscapes. The nostalgic landscape of the film helped to spur efforts to conserve and restore the remaining *Satoyama* (Yokohari and Bolthouse 2011). With these important differences from Western animation, anime can afford to develop an understanding that moves beyond the common human–environment relationship approach. With their unique aesthetic world, which is more provocative, more tragic, and contains far more complicated storylines than would be the case in equivalent American popular cultural offerings (Napier 2001a), anime can be a tool for understanding the complex human–environment relationship and environmental problems for landscape architects. We focus especially on the films of Hayao Miyazaki, who is defined as a masterful creator of both enchanting fantasies and thought-provoking scenarios (Cavallaro 2006).

1.4. Hayao Miyazaki's Films: His World View and Approaches to Anime

"We need courtesy toward water, mountains, and air in addition to living things. We should not ask courtesy from these things, but we ourselves should give courtesy toward them instead." (Miyazaki, as cited in Mayumi et al. 2005, p. 3)

Miyazaki's films teach some important lessons, such as the complexity of environmental conflicts, courtesy toward nature and each other, over-consumption, and even ecological economics (Mayumi et al. 2005). These films provide a mechanism for provoking and contributing to debates concerning environmentalism and offer audiences a way to find meaning about human life and our place in a wider interconnected web of ontological existence, as conveyed through an animated landscape (Chan 2015). In his films, Miyazaki tries to understand the relationship between the world and himself, doing this through the characters, with different worldviews, and their encounters with different situations, whether these include inner lives that are rich and abundant or narrow and limited (Bigelow 2009). The issues in Miyazaki's films range from environmental depletion, the horrors of war, the inequities under totalitarian regimes and between peoples, people's enslavement to commodity fetishism, to the setbacks entailed by personal development, the loss of innocence, and the cultivation of the values of loyalty, gratitude, courage, self-sacrifice, and love (Cavallaro 2006). Cavallaro (2006) defines Miyazaki's worlds as challenging and spellbinding due to their simultaneous evocation of an elating sense of freedom and a harrowing vision of life's darker facets.

The most powerful influence on Miyazaki's ideas arose from Sasuke Nakao's book, "The Cultivation of Plants and the Origin of Agriculture". Nakao refers to culture in forests of evergreens with thick, dark green and shiny leaves, which is called as the shiny-leaf culture (Yamanaka 2008), in which people depended on the forest and were anxious to coexist with it (Yoshioka 2008). Miyazaki had a drastic shift in his thinking about Japanese culture, and he turned his attention to the trees and the forests of Japan (Mayumi et al. 2005; Yamanaka 2008; Yoshioka 2008). According to Mayumi et al. (2005), this cultural tradition is something Miyazaki is proud of, and an important source for the scenes of *Princess Mononoke*. Since then, Miyazaki has held a deep love for the world of plants as a symbol of complexity

and diversity, and reflects his love by being involved in national trust movements such as the Totoro Home Country Foundation, which aims to preserve the forests of Japan (Mayumi et al. 2005). Animism is another source that has important influences on Miyazaki's work; he expressed that animism, rather than religion, is inside himself, and that some characters in his movies (e.g., Princess Nausicaä) are governed by a sort of animism (Mayumi et al. 2005; Napier 2001b; Yamanaka 2008). Animism is a combination of Shintoism and Buddhism and accepts that deity/kami exists in all beings. Shinto stresses relation and connectedness, emphasizing internal over external relations, where each part is reflected in the whole, and the whole is evident in every part, bringing spirit and matter together internally (Bigelow 2005). Miyazaki rejects the definition of the human as separate and distinct from nature and others and draws on notions of human interconnectedness with sentient and non-sentient beings. For him, the destruction of nature and the destruction of the human soul are the same (Bigelow 2005). He was identified as a deep ecologist because of his belief that the natural world does not exist only for humans to exploit; rather, the flourishing of all the Earth's creatures has its intrinsic value, independent of their usefulness for us (Reinders 2016). For Yamanaka (2008), the natural world in Miyazaki's films is represented not only as a physical environment but as something living by its own will.

Miyazaki makes his characters interact with different situations and deal with the results. By making them confront the damage they create to the environment, he forces us to think and find the answers about our practices (Thevenin 2013). Although Miyazaki's ideas intersect substantially with the approach of deep ecology, this alone is not sufficient to explain his philosophy. For Napier (2001a), Miyazaki tries to break down the viewer's conventional notion of the world. Napier (2001a) defines Miyazaki's vision as one that incorporates an ethical agenda that is expressed not only in terms of narrative and characters but also through his extraordinary animation. This vision is not only of "what is lost" but also of "what could be" (Napier 2001a). He helps us to recognize the complexity of our world. By depicting power relationships, he shares his understanding of contemporary environmental problems (Mayumi et al. 2005). For Bigelow (2009), Miyazaki shows how the commodity of cinema can be repurposed by the artist to communicate an understanding of the problems of our history and our time. For Cavallaro (2006), Miyazaki's films consistently celebrate ambiguity and irony over dogmatism, and diversity over uniformity, in the recognition that human virtues and flaws are always—inextricably and ineluctably—intertwined.

1.5. Analyzing the Human–Environment Relationship through Animated Landscapes: Landscape as Actor and Living Entity

Drawing on Burke's statement that a place can be an actor, and an actor can be a place, Tschida (2004) took interest in a narrative's potential to create meanings for what the environment is and how humans act in it by analyzing the environmental information that TV programs present through the metaphors that were used in the narrative. He defined actor and place metaphors and stated that the significance of them is in the potential of either to be useful in efforts to increase environmental awareness and sensibilities (Tschida 2004). The sub-theme of place metaphor, place as a living entity, sees place as a deserving entity, possessing certain rights, or as worthy of a certain level of respect because it is an organism of its own sort, that is, a location that survives on its own, a location that is alive. It may be an ecosystem or a habitat (Tschida 2004).

The actor metaphor is based on respect for the environment as an actor or character within narratives. This metaphor can be used to support efforts to restore a relationship with and respect for nature that is based on the idea that the environment has rights and a value other than what might be assigned by humans (Tschida 2004). Tschida (2004) suggests that examination of these metaphors might lead to a greater understanding of environmental rhetoric and might be a key to better environmental sensibility.

In Miyazaki's films, we see environments having their own spirit based on the Shinto belief. In other words, landscapes are alive with every being they include, and together they all form a

whole. The notions of a place as a living entity or the environment as an actor overlap greatly with the landscapes in Miyazaki films; therefore, they will be used in the theoretical framework of this study. This research attempts to lay out a theoretical foundation for using anime as a means for analyzing the human–environment relationship and its important philosophical differences from Western dualistic thinking. This study deals with various human communities, which have differing values and beliefs for their environment and how they perceive and change their environment. We aim to discuss the resulting landscapes of various approaches to nature and their characteristics. To accomplish this, we will show what the landscape consists of and how these are changing.

2. Methodology

2.1. Human–Nature Power Relations Approach

Flint et al. (2013) posit that there are multiple ways that people relate to nature in terms of power relations (e.g., master of nature, partner of/with nature, steward of nature, participant in nature, and nature is superior). Murray and Heumann (2007) used changing power relations to explain human–environment relations in animated shorts. They defined three groups as the power of nature over the human world, the interdependence of the human and natural worlds, and human exploitation of the natural world (Murray and Heumann 2007). Based on these ideas, this research explains the human–environment relationship through power relations and defines three categories: responsible landscapes where humans are a part of nature, and there is a harmony between human activities and nature; wilderness landscapes, which sees humans and nature as separate and where nature dominates humans; and apocalyptic landscapes, which also sees humans and nature as separate, but where humans dominate nature. First, the mentioned landscape types were defined in detail; their meanings, characteristics, and their relationship to Hayao Miyazaki films were explained. Then, with content analysis of the chosen films, the samples of categorized landscape types were determined and discussed in detail. We adopt a qualitative approach. In mapping cinematic landscapes, qualitative analysis emphasizes meaning and discusses inherent or distinctive characteristics. It aims to distinguish examples and to recognize innate properties (Harper and Rayner 2010). The properties of landscapes were discussed in relation to communities' interaction with them.

Based on Murray and Heumann (2007) study, a theoretical framework was established to analyze the landscapes in films (Figure 1, Table 1).

Table 1. The list of films and landscapes.

Landscape Type	Name of the Film	Name of the Setting
Wilderness Landscape	Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind Princess Mononoke	Fukai (Sea of Decay) Shishi Gami's forest
Apocalyptic Landscape	Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind Princess Mononoke	Destroyed human settlements and war scenes Shishi Gami's forest (the death of Shishi Gami) Tataraba (the Iron Town)
Responsible Landscape	My Neighbor Totoro Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind	Totoro's forest and surrounding settlements The Valley of the Wind

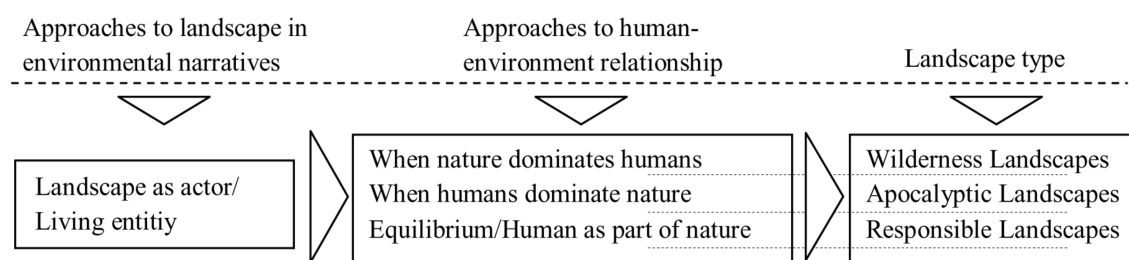


Figure 1. The theoretical framework of the research.

2.2. Landscape Types and Definitions

2.2.1. Wilderness Landscapes

Wilderness landscapes describe the ecosystem areas untouched by humans. The most common characteristic that is used to describe this term refers to the absence of humans (Crist 2004; Innes 2007; Saunders 2013). Wilderness is perceived as the other; therefore, it has been seen as a place to control and conquer or as a storehouse of raw materials (McDonald 2001). However, the definitions of wilderness from a deep ecology perspective most closely overlap the aims of this research. Miyazaki accepts nature's primary characteristic as interconnectedness, which is a reflection of the Shinto tradition, and deep ecology's definition of wilderness supports this point of view. Crist (2004) defines wilderness areas as biodiversity reserves, where native life can continue to flourish and evolve. Similarly, Comer (as cited in Saunders 2013) defines wilderness from the deep ecology point of view, as where biodiversity and the sacred coexist and as a reminder that humankind is not all-powerful. Snyder (1990, p. 12) explains wilderness in terms of ecology and ecosystems: "Wilderness is a place where the wild potential is fully expressed, a diversity of living and non-living beings flourishing according to their own sorts of order. [...] To speak of wilderness is to speak of wholeness."

In Miyazaki films, forests represent wilderness. Forests have been described as spiritual landscapes and as a refuge and source of subsistence; they were very important in the spiritual life of the first humans. People have always had a love-hate relationship with forests (Konijnendijk 2008), which is frequently reflected in Miyazaki films. Miyazaki believes that he and other Japanese people are the spiritual descendants of the glossy-leaf forests (Napier 2001b). "We must remember that we all come from forest" (Miyazaki, as cited in Mayumi et al. 2005, p. 3). Referring to Miyazaki's forests, Komatsu (as cited in Yoshioka 2008, p. 262) argues that what Miyazaki does is create his own mythos that reflects this forest cosmology. Therefore, Miyazaki reflects forests as areas of wilderness. Napier (2001a) states that Miyazaki's privileging of forests and trees in pre-war or even pre-modern settings in works such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Laputa* reflects his vision of what is lost and includes a world in which nature is not yet dominated by humanity and exists as a powerful force in itself, strong in its identity as the non-human Other. As the other side of this what is lost vision, the what could be vision of Miyazaki depicts worlds in which nature still exerts independent power, embodied in the scene in *Princess Mononoke* of the great woodland god, the Shishi Gami, extending its neck in the moonlit forest. Both sides of his visions form an elegiac mode of anime, which suggests loss, absence, and unfulfilled desire (Napier 2001a).

2.2.2. Apocalyptic (Dystopian) Landscapes

The apocalyptic or dystopian landscape refers to places where humans altered and spoiled the balance of nature by exerting power over it. These places are the resulting areas where irrevocable damage was done to nature's systems. The term apocalyptic is defined as a catastrophic event or destruction, usually involving human deaths and widespread destruction of land or the urban environment (Walliss 2014; Weaver 2009). Apocalyptic narratives have included a representation of nature gone awry through human actions (Ivakhiv 2008) and perceived as a kind of punishment or the result of nature taking revenge (Dürbeck 2012). Napier (2001b) suggests that in many works of anime, much of the narrative tension is not from waiting for the end of the world but from the revelation of how and why the world should end. Apocalyptic narratives have positive functions and serve varied purposes; for example, they seek to avoid real-life future disasters and can encourage readers to evaluate their own real-life culture and politics (Weaver 2009). They also provide a means for thinking about human identity, the potential for and limitations of human capabilities for manipulating nature (Taylor 2006), and they can move an audience (Tschida 2004). They can also serve as warnings against blind faith in technologies and point to the necessity and urgency of social change (Dürbeck 2012).

In apocalyptic narratives, we see the destructive powers of humans in an effort to conquer, to control nature, and to gain dominance over it. In Miyazaki's films, apocalyptic scenes include humans'

misuse of technology because of their greed, resulting in the full-scale destruction caused by humans. A common characteristic of the films is collapsing and changing landscapes as a result of humans' destructive practices. The war scenes between humans and between humans and nature will be discussed under this section.

2.2.3. Responsible Landscapes

Responsible landscapes reflect the state of equilibrium of the relationship between nature and human activities, which is the result of a worldview as humans accept themselves as part of nature along with other beings, where humans do not restrain the cycles of nature and live in harmony and sustainably with it. [Barnhill \(2010\)](#) explains this as a way of being part of and interacting with nature in a harmonious and sustainable way; it is a way of flowing with rather than resisting the land. For [Saunders \(2013\)](#), particularity and dynamism of the interconnectedness of place and people define the attributes where humans live in harmony with nature. These characteristics overlap with the ecosystem approach of deep ecology. Deep ecology affirms that "everything hangs together—everything is interrelated" ([Naess 2005a](#)). Responsible landscapes reflect a different perspective about how we must approach nature through self-realization and acceptance of our responsibilities toward it. These concepts create positive anticipation about living in more undisturbed environments by advising humans to behave consciously and sensitively towards their ecosystem. They create awareness about sustainability and interconnectedness.

In Miyazaki's films, rural landscapes represent responsible landscapes. [Rofe \(2013\)](#) defines rural utopias as reflecting community cohesion, harmony with nature, and physical and moral vigor borne of honest labor. [Chan \(2015\)](#) elaborates the rural life in Miyazaki's films (especially the Valley of the Wind) with the Daoist (Taoist) concepts of *wu-wei* and *you-wei*. She defines *wu-wei* as a concept that refers to non-action, yielding or flowing with natural forces. Therefore, *wu-wei* refers to technologically related activities that are aligned with natural processes, such as windmills. Conversely, *you-wei* refers to those technologically related activities that disrupt natural forces ([Chan 2015](#)). In Miyazaki's films, responsible landscapes are inspired from real places, such as *Satoyama* landscapes, traditional rural landscapes of Japan, or they can be from Miyazaki's own imagination. People who live in these landscapes have a peaceful life, are respectful to nature, and for them, human and non-human entities are equally valuable.

2.3. Information on the Films That Will Be Analyzed

2.3.1. Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Japanese Title: *Kaze no tani no Naushika*)

This story is about a tiny valley community in a post-apocalyptic world that survived the disaster and their princess. Nausicaä. Valley of the Wind depicts an idyllic rural landscape of people living in harmony with nature. This valley is surrounded by Fukai (Sea of Decay), a sort of forest in which fungi release poisonous spores. As the story unfolds, the Valley of the Wind is positioned between the war of two other countries; Nausicaä tries to end the war and the hatred of people against Fukai. In the film, contrasting landscapes are depicted. The Valley of the Wind is portrayed as a small peaceful village with patchwork-like cultivated fields and windmills; contrarily, the film opens with a long-destroyed town and, in the upcoming war scenes, ruined, blasted cities in fire and filled with black smoke are shown.

2.3.2. My Neighbor Totoro (Japanese Title: *Tonari no Totoro*)

This story is about two sisters, Satsuki and Mei, becoming friends with a forest spirit, Totoro. The story begins with the Kusakabe family moving from the city to the countryside to provide a healthier environment for their ailing mother who is at the hospital. The narrative takes place in the agricultural countryside of the Sayama Hills west of Tokyo in the late 1950s and includes a detailed depiction of the rural *Satoyama* landscape of that time.

2.3.3. Princess Mononoke (Japanese Title: *Mononoke Hime*)

Princess Mononoke is the story of three main characters—San (Princess Mononoke), Lady Eboshi, and Ashitaka—and the communities to which they belong. The film deals with the conflict between nature and developing industry and communicates harsh environmental messages. San is a young girl abandoned by her parents and raised by the wolf god Moro, who fights against the humans who destroy the forest for their own gain. The forest is ruled by a gigantic deer-like presence known as the Shishi Gami. Lady Eboshi rules Tataraba, which is an iron forging camp. It was built on the border of Shishi Gami's forest, and the people in Tataraba spoil the environment. Ashitaka is in love with San but tries to help both sides of this conflict and seeks to end the crisis of hatred and rage. Napier (2001a) defines the film as dealing with the loss of a Japan in which nature, rather than humans, ruled. The film may be seen as a violent, indeed apocalyptic, elegy for a lost Japan, while at the same time it offers an alternative, heterogeneous, and female-centered vision of Japanese identity for the future. Princess Mononoke is a powerful and moving work, but also a disturbing one which can be termed as the cinema of de-assurance. (Napier 2001a).

3. Results

3.1. Wilderness Landscapes: Forests of Miyazaki

Under this heading two forests of Miyazaki are discussed; Fukai in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Shishi Gami's forest in Princess Mononoke. In terms of their development, these two forests are quite different. Shishi Gami's forest belongs to the prewar period, and existed apart from human intervention; on the contrary, Fukai exists in a post-apocalyptic world as a result of human intervention and in a world that has been polluted by humanity. However, both forests are the places where nature rules and that humans avoid entering and are afraid of. Both forests, like a mirror, reflect the bias of humanity against forests/nature and that the essence of nature is completely different from that of humanity.

Fukai is a new type of ecosystem, which is a huge fungi forest with phosphorescent plants, cathedral-like caverns, water, mutant insects, snowstorms of pollens from plants, and a giant mutant insect called Ohmu, who rules this forest. The flora of the jungle presents the location as a very lively place that is full of mystery. It is a living, dynamic entity and is seen as monstrous and wrathful. It is a toxic jungle forest that is heavily polluted and deadly to humans (Yang and Buffington 2007). Cavallaro (2006) describes the forest as a deadly but beautiful landscape teeming with life. Its floor turns out to be to the branches of the subterranean canopy of huge trees. Since the plants release poisonous gases and because of the wild mutant insects, Fukai is strictly avoided by humans, but, in fact, the reason for the poisonous gasses is not the fungi itself but the polluted soil. The entire forest operates as a purifying organism: the trees absorb the poisons from the soil, crystallize and neutralize them, and then dissolve them into sand (Wright 2005). When Nausicaä finds out this fact, she explains it as "The trees of the Sea of Decay (Fukai) grew to cleanse a world polluted by humans." Fukai symbolizes forests' purifying functions and role as a source of life. Trees and forests affect human health and wellbeing by helping to moderate the effects of other physical environmental factors. Trees and forests can filter potentially harmful air pollution and solar radiation (Konijnendijk 2008). What Miyazaki aims to show the audience is not a proof of forests having benign functions for people; instead, he tries to show how humanity is being biased and making unfair judgments; he expresses that we are wrong. For Yang and Buffington (2007), the forest symbolizes the extent to which humanity has destroyed its own soul by destroying nature and serves as a warning to the hubris of humanity's desire to control nature. It reflects how humanity's growing disaffection with the environment causes fear and hostility against nature and humanity itself, and by destroying nature as a conscious and wilful entity, it becomes all the more monstrous (Yang and Buffington 2007).

Shishi Gami's forest is a dark, sacred, and magical forest of ancient trees that is populated with animal clans (wolves, boars, and monkeys) and with spirits—mainly, Deer God, Shishi Gami—who

occupy superior positions to humans. We see a dense forest in deep green and browns with forest pools. The ancient trees are the mother of the Kodama spirits whose presence means that the forest is healthy. The forest's inner sanctum, Shishi Gami's pond, reflects the Japanese belief of holy places—notably secluded areas “where pure water is running in the depth of the forest in the deep mountains”—which, it was believed, “humans should not enter” (Miyazaki, as cited in [Cavallaro 2006](#), p. 122). For humans, the forest is a wild and threatening place, consistently avoided by human characters in the film. When Ashitaka and wounded workers first encounter kodamas, one of the wounded gets terrified, but Ashitaka says they are not harmful and bring good luck. Here we see how the perception humans have of nature changes depending on their culture. While Ashitaka, who grew up in a community that lives in harmony with nature and respects it, perceives the forest as a place where humanity must behave respectfully and carefully, for the Tataraba worker and his community, that place is harmful. For them, the forest is menacing, unfriendly, and an enemy. How humans see the forest as an other was reflected through this Tataraba worker. As they move through the depths of the forest, we witness the beauties of the forest, and they suffer no harm from it. They even recover after drinking the water from a forest pool, and kodamas helped them to find their way through the forest. Miyazaki not only tries to show that wild places are not evil, but he also confronts viewers with their biases and shows another way of approaching nature. He presents the message that if we behave as Ashitaka does, instead of offending and changing but respecting and trying to comprehend and becoming a part of it, nature is not our enemy. [Napier \(2001a\)](#) describes the forest in Princess Mononoke as a classic example of the traditional Japanese valorization of nature. [Bigelow \(2009\)](#) describes the visual poetry of Princess Mononoke as a call to awareness of a larger life system to which the human being is a part. In this sense, the landscapes of Miyazaki's films work as means for achieving self-realization. Miyazaki says that what he was interested in portraying was a sense of the depth and the mystery of the friendliness and awe-inspiring nature of a forest (Miyazaki, as cited in [Wright 2005](#)). However, the forest is not just a beautiful place; at the same time, the forest of Shishi Gami symbolizes the boundary beyond which humans should not enter. With this symbolic boundary, Miyazaki refers to the fact that humans cannot wholly control or domesticate nature. [Chan \(2015\)](#) suggests that by rendering the landscape as majestic and a site of biological diversity and ecological importance, the forest landscapes of Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke encourage audiences to care about environmental concerns.

3.2. Apocalyptic Landscapes: Sites of Tension and Destruction

Apocalyptic landscapes in Miyazaki's films are sites of tension between different human communities or between humans and nature. Destroyed human settlements and war scenes in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Tataraba (Iron Town), and Shishi Gami's death in Princess Mononoke are discussed as apocalyptic landscapes.

The destruction of human settlements and nature in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind takes place both in the past and present. The film opens with a scene of a long-destroyed town. The buildings and trees with spores blanketing them, things crumbling into pieces, the creepy sound of howling winds, and the strong feeling of loneliness make this landscape frightening. The city was swallowed by the Sea of Decay, which reminds us that humans should not cross the boundary of nature's domination. The destruction scenes in the film do not end with these. Communities in the present ignore the past and continue to destroy nature with the misuse of technology. Ruined, cities blasted in fire and black smoke evoke considerably dramatic and scary feelings. We see two countries at war trying to use giant insects as weapons, and we see how by doing this they disturb the peace and balance of the ecosystem in the Sea of Decay. In turn, nature takes revenge with severe rage. With these scenes, Miyazaki powerfully illustrates how the human search for power harms nature but, more importantly, also themselves. Seeing the harm caused by humans, Princess Nausicaä says, “Who made such a terrible mess of the world?” (Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, 1984). This also expresses the reaction of Miyazaki for the destruction that humans have caused in the real world. Miyazaki reflects how humans misuse technology and what happens when we forget the past mistakes of humanity. Also,

the mushroom cloud in the film refers to the atom bombs from which Japanese people suffered so much, as well as the reality of war and misuse of technology.

Princess Mononoke is set during the Muromachi period (1392–1573) when the first deliberate attempts by humans to master nature, rather than honor and appraise it, takes place; therefore, this was a time of great upheaval when the relationship between humanity and nature was radically changing in Japan (Cavallaro 2006; Wright 2005). Miyazaki says “It was in this period that people changed their value system from gods to money” (as cited in Bigelow 2005). Tataraba, an iron forging camp in the Western mountains of Princess Mononoke, is settled by the Shishi Gami’s forest. Indeed, Tataraba is a weapons-manufacturing plant that mines iron ore for armaments. The town is governed by Lady Eboshi, and the workers are men and women who are excluded from the social order. The first scenes of Tataraba depict a landscape with buildings producing black smoke and bare mountains around it without trees. Although the mountains are sacred and protected by many animal gods and their clans, the workers are at war with them; they cut trees, destroy the forest, and dig the Earth for iron, which can be defined as an example of human exploitation and negligence of the natural world. Miyazaki created Lady Eboshi as a character that is representative of modern humans. The attitude of Eboshi reflects the materialist tendencies of our modern society: she does not see nature in terms of interconnectedness and balance. For her, nature is a source of materials, which she needs for the advancement of industrialization and for making money. Although she has no respect or sympathy for nature and the forest surrounding her, she is a defender of the weak, with an equal outlook towards both men and women and is compassionate to her own community. Seeing completely contrasting attitudes from the same person, the audience cannot simply categorize her as good or evil. Therefore, the audience blames Lady Eboshi and the workers for what they did, but they also understand why they did this. In this way, Miyazaki reflects that finding solutions to contemporary environmental problems is more complex than it seems, and we need to learn to look at the world from different perspectives. Tomos (2013) explains this as Miyazaki challenging the audience to face the dilemma of modern Japan, that is, the need for an advanced economy against the destruction of the natural environment, which we think is indeed a global problem of the modern world and not only of Japan.

The film shows the destruction of Shishi Gami’s forest as a result of human efforts to dominate nature. Humans (Lady Eboshi) succeed to cut off the head of Shishi Gami in the battle, which destroys the forest. This act is the result of humans losing courtesy toward nature and the adoption of superiority over it. Killing Shishi Gami symbolizes how humanity gives up believing in the soul and liveliness of nature and transforms it into a raw material stock. The destruction scenes show the lively, green forest turning brown and cracking open, and the forest spirits dying. In the end, Shishi Gami’s head was returned to him, and following his death, the apparent restoration of nature and harmony is seen again as the world turns green. Miyazaki relates the changes of nature, which result from human actions, with humans’ morality and values as “The glossy-leafed forests that once covered Western Japan have been replaced by bald mountains. [. . .] But the heart of the Japanese also changed.” (Miyazaki, as cited in Bigelow 2005). In these sentences, Miyazaki refers to the relationship between and interconnectedness of humans and nature, so that if one loses, the other does as well. Viewing this ecological apocalypse, the film leaves the audience feeling sorrow, guilt, shamed and with a sense of uncertainty at the end. How the story will continue depends on the audience; if we understand the interconnectedness between us and change the way we live on Earth, there may be a happy ending.

3.3. Responsible Landscapes: Flowing with Nature’s Rhythm

We discussed peaceful communities who see themselves as part of nature and live in harmony with it. The valley of the wind in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, Totoro’s forest and surrounding settlements in My Neighbor Totoro are analyzed and explained.

The Valley of the wind is one of the few remaining refuges, and it is Princess Nausicaä’s realm that opens to an ocean. With the help of breezes from the sea, it is protected from poisonous gasses. Surrounded by high mountains, the small community of the Valley of the Wind is isolated from other

communities and is different from them in that the Valley of the Wind does not destroy nature. There, people live in harmony with their natural surroundings. Despite the hazard of Fukai's poisonous gasses and spores, it is seen that this small and pastoral community's pre-modern life is peaceful and colorful. The landscape of the valley is peaceful like the community that lives within it. Windmills are the most dominant characteristics of this valley, which reflect harmony with nature by using the wind as a source of energy without harming nature. The settlement of the small community is surrounded by vegetable gardens, which are shown like a patchwork from a bird's view. Within this settlement, the windmills are dispersed in gardens, and forests comprise the landscape of the valley. We see Princess Nausicaä flying with a wind glider many times in the film, which is another reflection of Miyazaki's messages about using energy resources and technology wisely.

The environment depicted in *My Neighbor Totoro* is a nostalgic landscape. The traditional rural landscape, *Satoyama*, represented in the film tells us about 1950s post-World War II Japanese landscapes. Based on Imamori's definition, [Yokohari and Bolthouse \(2011\)](#) explained *Satoyama* for non-Japanese speakers as a traditional form of agricultural environment where *sato* (village/people) and *yama* (mountain/nature) coexist side by side in harmony. This description reflects a traditional harmony between human communities (*sato*) and non-human nature (*yama*) and draws attention to the spatial and relational proximity between village life and woodlands ([Yokohari and Bolthouse 2011](#)). The *Satoyama* scenes in the film portray the rural settlements and vegetable gardens, with forests behind them and upland tea-rice fields around them. While vegetation and architecture meet and merge in mutual suffusion ([Cavallaro 2006](#)), we see water and sky as other main components of Miyazaki's *Satoyama* landscape. [Yoshimura \(2007\)](#) explains the family's move to the countryside as an attempt to connect with the natural wisdom and spontaneity and a desire for healing and wholeness. The family's garden is next to an enormous, ancient camphor tree, which is believed to protect from disease and is a dispenser of vital power and a never failing source of energy. The landscape in the film is described as nostalgia for a time when people lived more closely and interacted with nature ([Wright 2005](#); [Yoshimura 2007](#)) and reflects the beauty and importance of living in harmony with nature. Miyazaki provokes the audience to be more sensitive to nature by showing how living harmoniously with nature creates a joyful, relaxed and healthy life. According to [Yokohari and Bolthouse \(2011\)](#), the film played a powerful part in raising public concern for *Satoyama* landscapes. The manner of the humans in the film towards nature also strengthen the image of the landscape. We see sisters that eagerly make relationships with the living world around them. The scenes in which they befriend Totoro, in which they help Totoro to make the seeds sprout, and in which their father, in a little ceremony, offers the camphor tree thanks for looking after their house, are especially remarkable.

4. Conclusions

In this study, the communities in Miyazaki's films that hold different beliefs, traditions and values about nature were discussed. Also, we discussed how they perceive and shape their environment. Miyazaki sees and reflects landscapes as living entities and expresses the interconnectedness of everything in nature. Miyazaki does not deal with social themes and the status of the environment as separate, but instead investigates them as one. While giving important social messages (missing moral values on nature, greediness for money, malignancy of war, misuse of technology), he uses architecture and landscape as an actor to effectively describe the community's environment. While we watch the villagers cutting trees and killing the creatures of a forest, the landscape, as a living entity (an actor), accomplishes and emphasizes the events by constantly changing and even sometimes becoming the leading role. In his films, social themes reflect the different worldviews of humans/societies; how they understand and interact with nature, and how they construct their relationship with their environment is part of this worldview. Since landscapes will respond to human actions with their own power and force ([Curti 2008](#)), each human worldview will result in different power relations. In this context, filmic landscapes will not only help us to understand responsible landscapes better but also contribute to the audience achieving self-realization. Depending on this assumption, the landscapes

were classified into three groups based on these power relations between humans and nature. In this manner, through the landscapes in Miyazaki's films we tried to understand and emphasize the situation of humans as part of nature and the importance of conserving the balance of nature as a result of human activities; the bitter results of when the balance is not preserved are warnings also for landscape architects. Wilderness landscapes explain situations and communities where humans are biased against nature; when nature is socially constructed as possessing them as the other. With wilderness landscapes, Miyazaki reveals that nature is labeled dangerous or evil, but indeed it is friendly, and a living entity that includes a rich variety and humans are also a part of it. When humans accept this, when they preserve their interconnectedness with other beings and try to be in harmony with it, the resulting coherence between humans and nature is explained under the responsible landscape. Miyazaki confronts us with wrathful, destructive and vengeful nature with apocalyptic landscapes when humans try to dominate it, especially with the misuse of technology. In their study, [Flint et al. \(2013\)](#) posit that there are multiple ways that people relate to nature, such as from the pursuit of mastery over nature in the quest to tame wild nature to notions of idealized or Edenic visions of nature and the sense of stewardship, responsibilities guided by religious doctrine or other ethical directions. The classification in this study focuses on only three of them, and they can be diversified in their combinations. Humans can be part of nature yet impose imbalanced power relationships, or humans can see themselves as above nature yet preserve the wholeness of an ecosystem.

Contrary to the ideas that see meanings apart from the nature of things, for Miyazaki meanings and their value are intrinsic; landscapes are not valuable only when humans appraise them as being so. This dilemma is the starting point of many problems that modern humanity faces. There should be a consistency between the intrinsic value and humans' understanding of it. An environment should not be changed into something just because humans find it is proper in that way. What Miyazaki tries to explain is that the greediness of humans and their anthropocentric understanding makes the problems more complicated. In his films, Miyazaki displays an ecological way of thinking that is parallel to deep ecology and argues that each part is meaningful for the system and has its place and own value within it. [Naess \(2005b\)](#) argues that what is important is to get people to see reality and our relation to nature; he defines the whole planet as the basic unit and notes that every living being has an intrinsic value. For him, the wellbeing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value and inherent worth. This value is independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for narrow human purposes. In this sense, landscapes are living beings. Similar to Shinto's belief in interconnectedness, deep ecology accepts that every part of an ecosystem hangs together. Responsible landscapes respect this fact and provide their inhabitants with an essentially democratic setting, enriching their opportunities by maximizing the degree of choice available to them. Miyazaki confronts us with the realities of the modern world and forces us to ask ourselves questions.

In this case, the need to change our perceptions and awareness of our responsibilities is inevitable. Here, responsibility does not include law, obligations or rules but ecological awareness and an understanding of interconnectedness. It is an agent to maintain harmony between human activity and the environment. With such an approach, a landscape design with a strong and rich combination of social, aesthetic, and environmental values can be achieved, and responsible landscapes can be developed. By adopting the view of the landscape as a living entity, landscape architects will be able to develop an insight into a landscape concept as a respectful partner they can work together with, instead of an insight or as a material they shape with ecological concerns. Similar approaches can be observed in the field of environmental ethics; environmental philosophers like Merchant (as cited in [Antal and Drews 2015](#)) call for a "partnership ethic" between human and non-human partners. To improve this relationship, [Antal and Drews \(2015\)](#) advise us to understand ourselves better, to identify and correct errors in thinking, and to develop mutually advantageous solutions instead of abusing this partner. Such an effort will lead to the acknowledgment of responsibility and

reciprocity in human–nature relationships (Antal and Drews 2015). Such an understanding will pave the way for responsible designs and, as their product, responsible landscapes.

Author Contributions: S.M. wrote the paper, performed content analysis and data collection, and did data analysis and interpretations. S.Y. provided assistance in developing the preliminary ideas of the study, data analysis and interpretation. S.M. and S.Y. provided revisions to the scientific content of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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