

Contrasting Cultural Landscapes?

Commentaries on landscape architecture education, research and practice in Australia and Thailand

Public Lecture

Thursday 11th February 2010

4.30-6.00pm,

Rm 211 Faculty of Architecture,
Chulalongkorn University

Dr Sidh Sintusingha

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

The University of Melbourne

Visiting Researcher, Department of Landscape Architecture

Chulalongkorn University

The cultural frame : Material culture and Culture as 'flow'

Preserving historic cultural 'shells'; monuments to the past

Culture as 'flow'



“cul·ture [kuhl-cher]

–noun 1.the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc.2.that which is excellent in the arts, manners, etc.3.**a particular form or stage of civilization, as that of a certain nation or period: Greek culture.** 4.development or improvement of the mind by education or training.5.the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group: the youth culture; the drug culture. 6.*Anthropology. the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.* www.dictionary.com

“The Thai concept of **Wathanatham** is more comprehensive than the Western concept of ‘culture’ in that it expresses a more dynamic concept of ‘The Way of Life’. And in Oriental, like in Heraclitian thinking ‘Way of Life’ is like a stream, or a road (Tao). It encompasses all aspects of life and is moreover open for change, and surprise, good or bad.” (Alting Von Geusau, 1989, p.1 as quoted by Aasen, 1998, p.7)

Australian

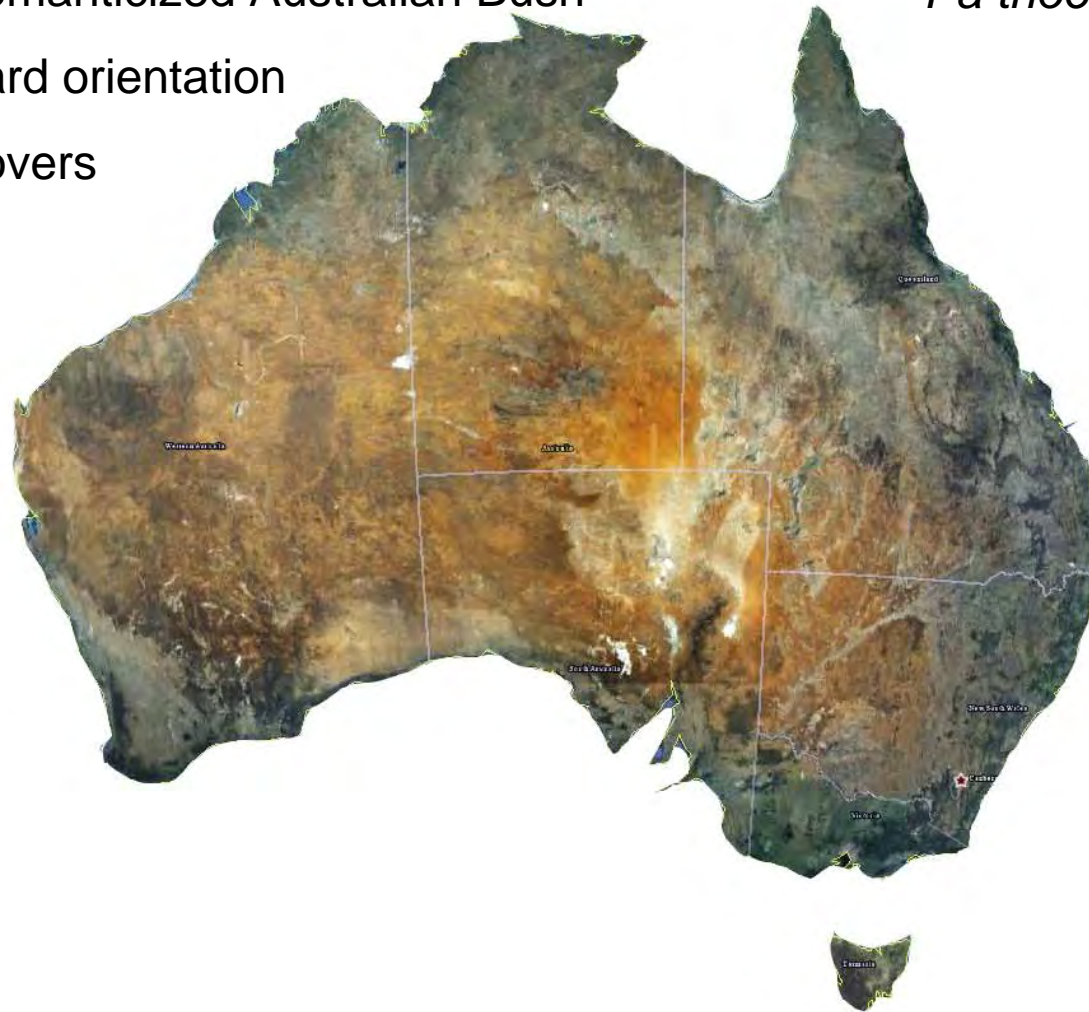
Thai

'Landscapes' – the nature frame

The romanticized Australian Bush

Outward orientation

Sun-lovers



Pa thoen The barbaric Thai jungle

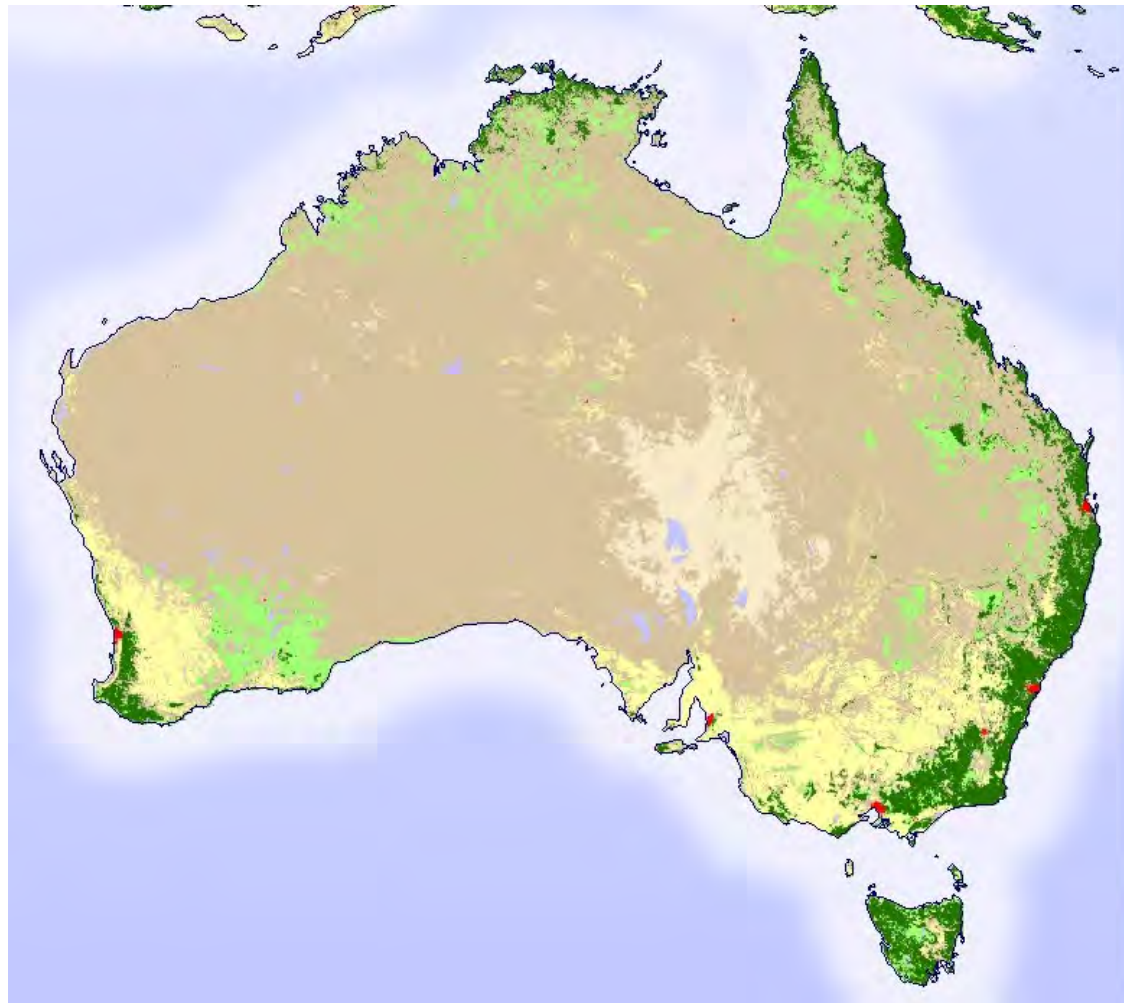
Inward orientation

Sun-avoiders



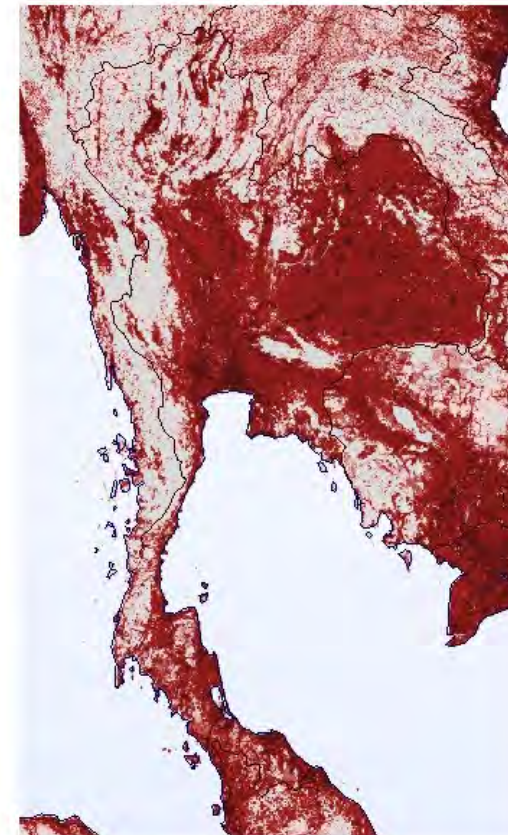
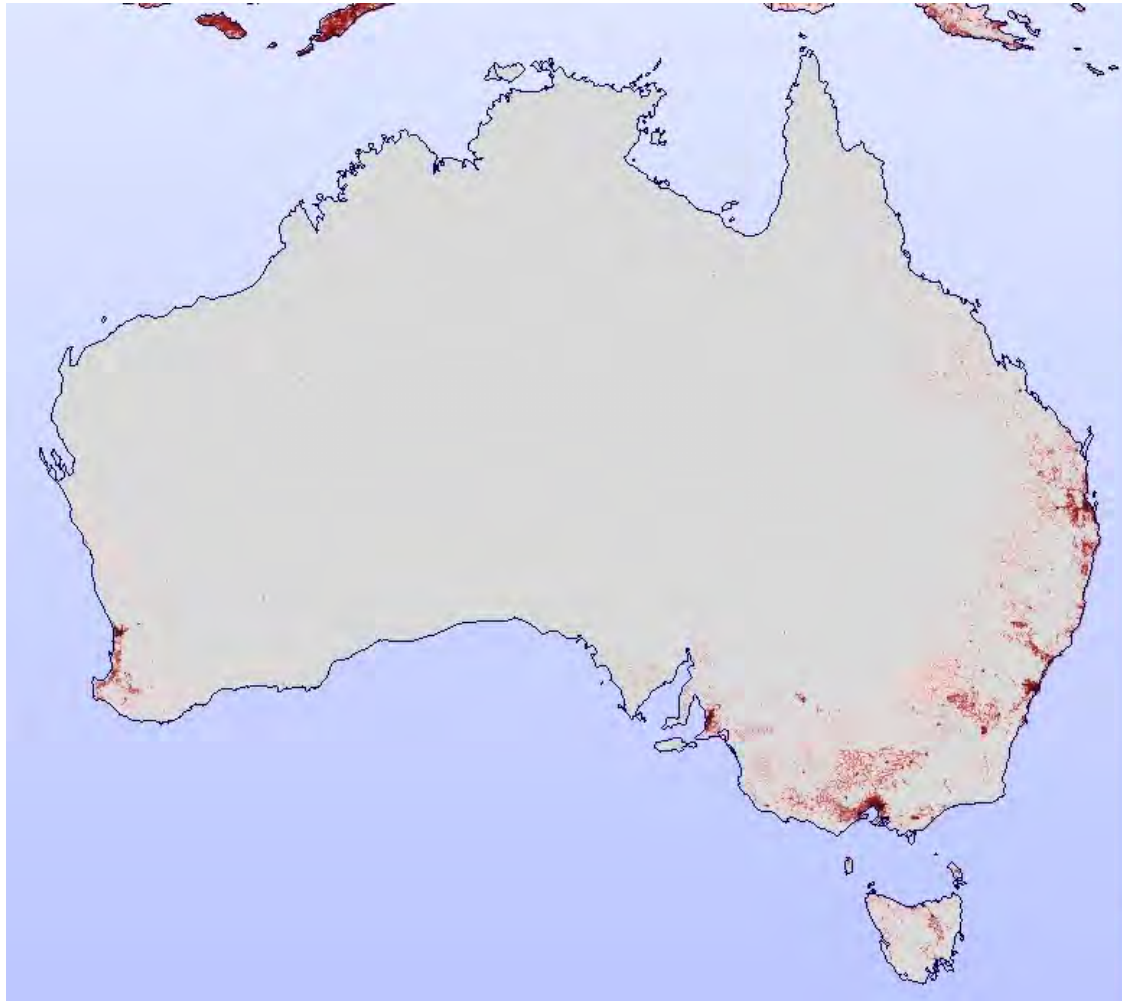
(Graphic source: Adapted from Wikimapia 02/06/09)

'Landscapes' – the landcover frame

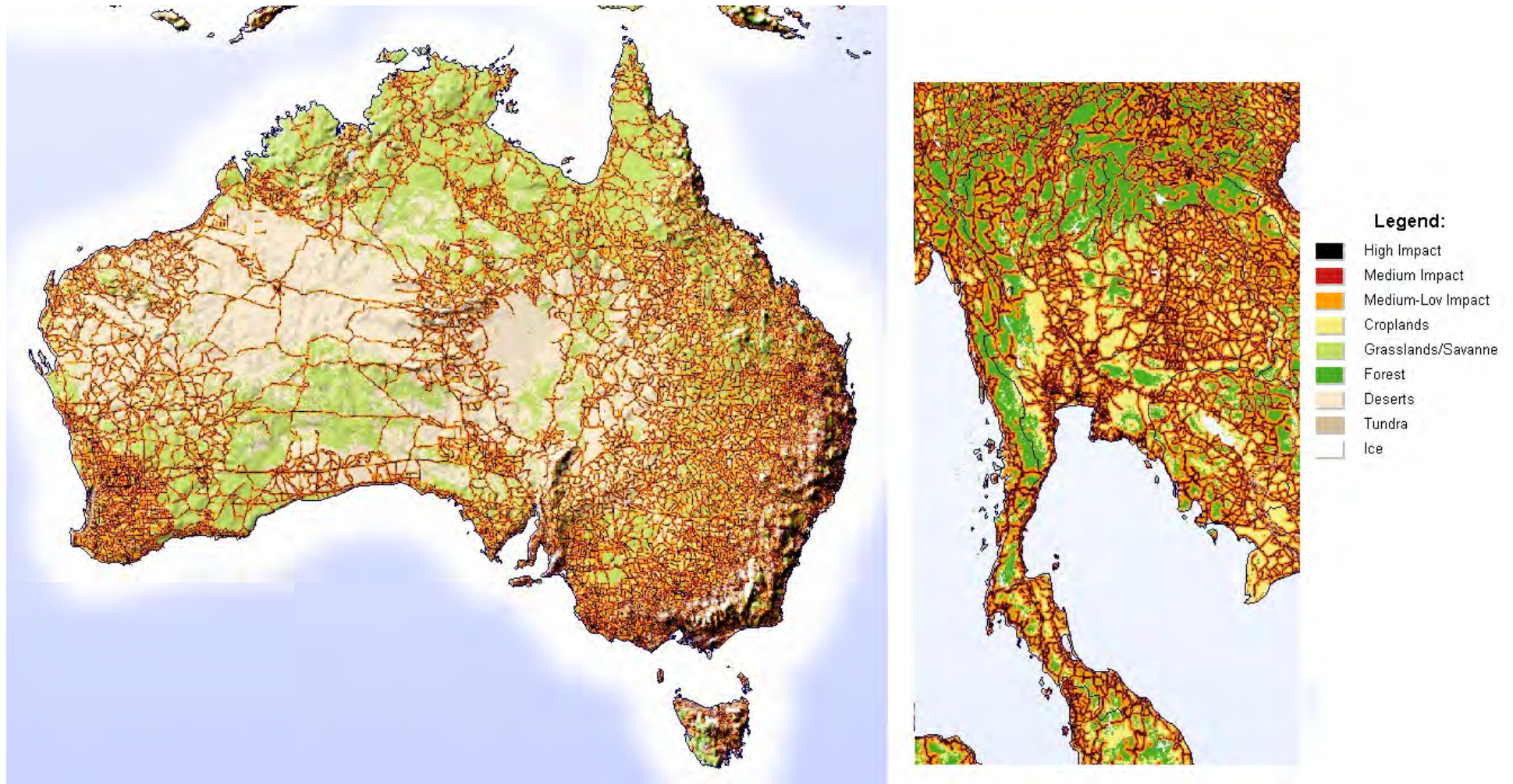
**Legend:**

- Treecover. evergreen
- Treecover. other
- Treecover. burnt
- Shrubs
- Cultivated (agriculture)
- Bare (sand/rocks)
- Ice and snow
- Water
- Artificial surfaces (urban areas)

'Landscapes' – the settlement frame



'Landscapes' – the the conflict frame: Human Impact 2002



'Landscapes' – the sacred frame

" 'Cultural' landscapes... are simultaneously 'real' (hosting physical and ecological systems) and 'imaginary' (recognized by people through their collage of images)..." (Selman, 2006, P.3)



The English Picturesque tradition imposed on the Aboriginal sacred landscapes.

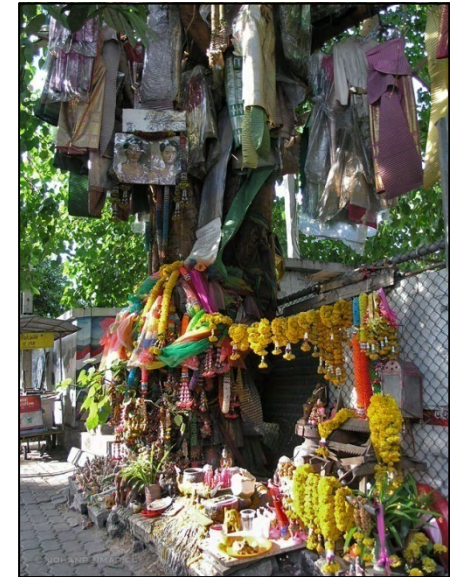
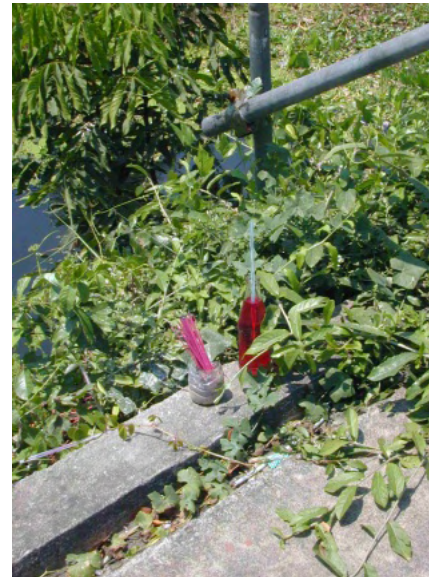
Landscape Ecology: 1960s conservationist narrative: Natural landscape as reference for a nation-wide narrative.

Appearance in the public realm

Traditional narrative: spirits to be appeased

19th Century modernist narrative: Natural landscape to be tamed, cleared and controlled

Disappearance from the public realm



Australian

Thai

'Landscapes' – interpreted nature frame

“...Perhaps most importantly, modern theories of landscape represent it as a holistic entity within which natural and human processes merge, and where economic, social and ecological objectives can be balanced in the pursuit of sustainable development.” (Selman, p.1)

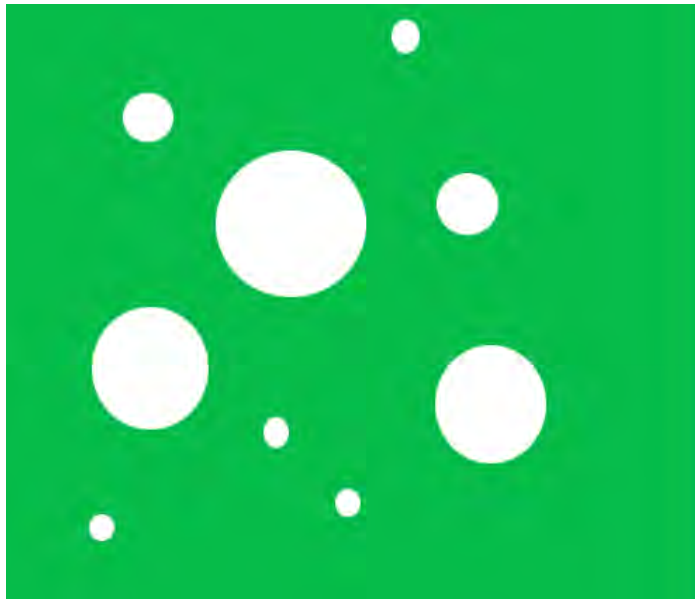


Source: Sintusingha photo collection

'Landscapes' - the built frame

Public and ecological infrastructure

Bounded fragments



Urban public realm and ecological network

Linear spaces

The private garden

Bounded places

Australian

Thai

'Landscapes' - the 'designed' & built frame

Public and ecological infrastructure

Bounded fragments



Urban public realm and ecological network

The private garden



Source: Sintusingha photo collection

Australian
Practice

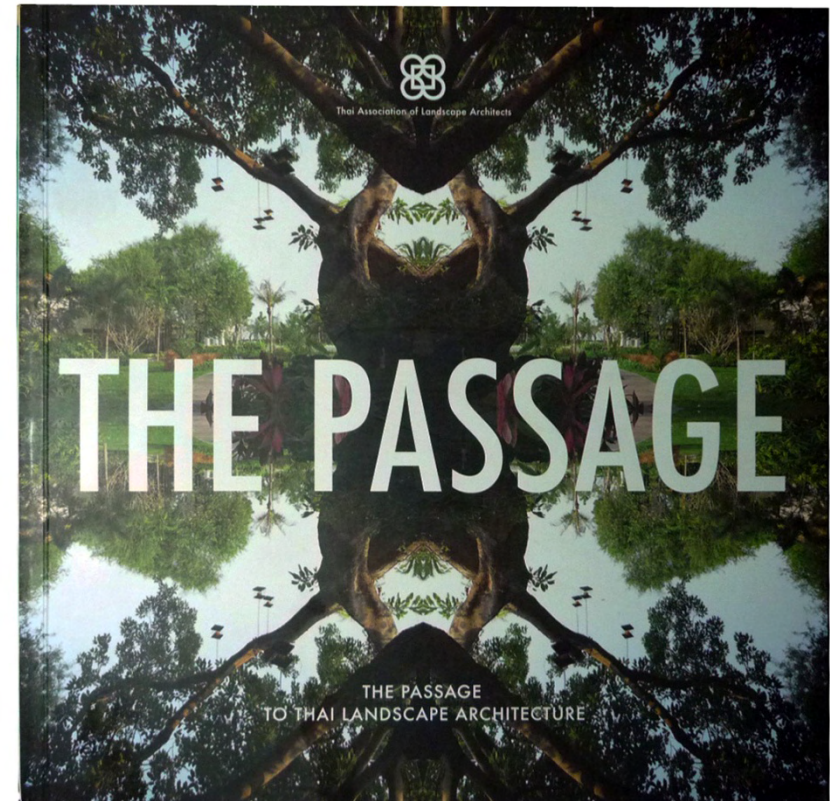
Public advocator in the realm of the
planner

Thai

Private sector service in the realm of the
architect



The landscape is wide – but can look directionless? No clear strengths? Who is the public (the client)?



The landscape is delimited – building on specific strengths, attributes and skills

Australian
Practice

Industrial standardization & 'professionalism'

Regulated and prefabricated landscapes



Thai

Customization & 'family-like'



Hand-made landscape artefacts

Australian *Education*

Landscape and spatial planning

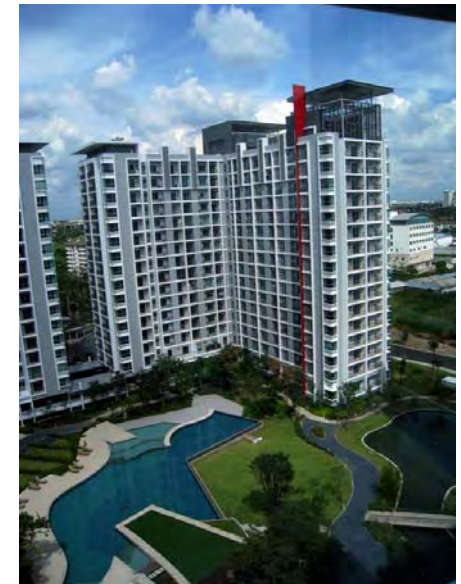
Thai

Landscape Design



Process negotiators and space shapers:
the 'public' as client

Source: Sintusingha photo collection



Form makers: Based on the tradition of
architectural design rigor

Source lower left L49 Landscape Architects

Australian
Education

Towards 'research-led' education

Thai

Practice-led education



Present-future orientation

(Source: New York Times 21/10/08)



Present orientation

(Source: L49 Landscape Architects)

'The individual' and society

Individualists

Bounded social capital – family & social network

Public rights

Hierarchical

Equal

Informal rules and relationships

Formal rules & regulations, power structure

Informal social safety net

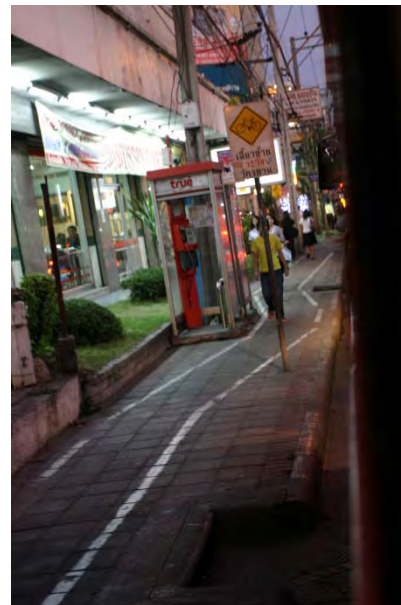
Citizen policing

Uneven wealth distribution

Welfare birth to death

19th Century master and servant

Middle class



Judged as an individual

Judged as family, institutional and social network

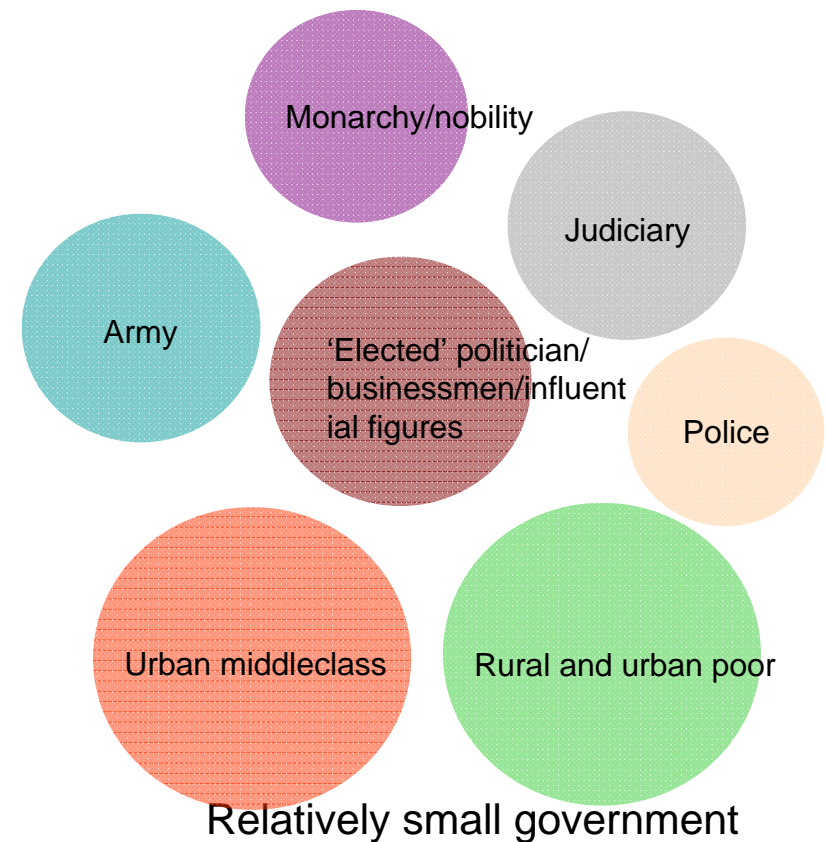
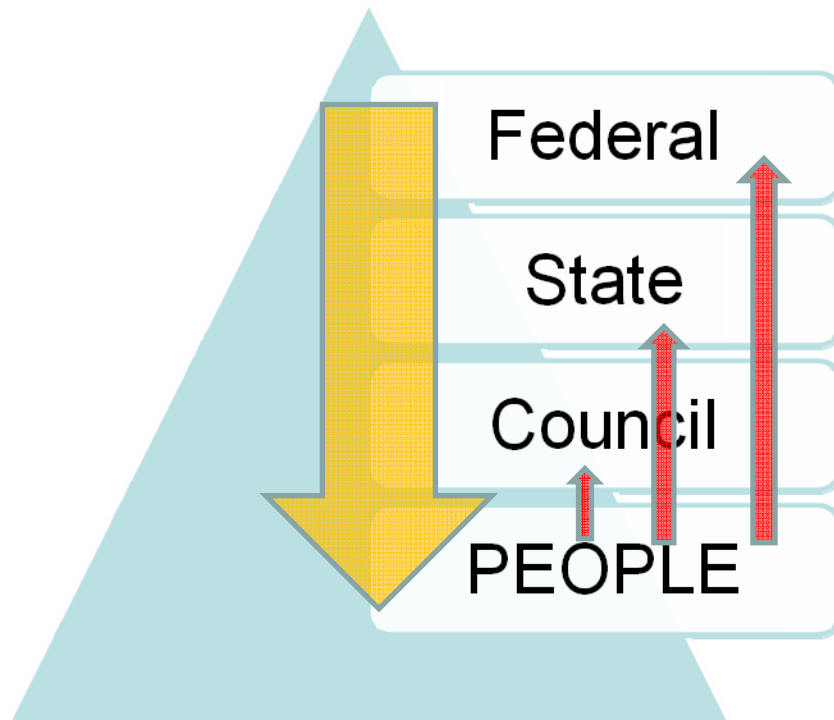
Australian

Thai

'The individual' and society: political landscapes

Democratic and formalized economy

Developing democracy and mixed
formal/informal economy



'The individual' and society in greenwashed societies

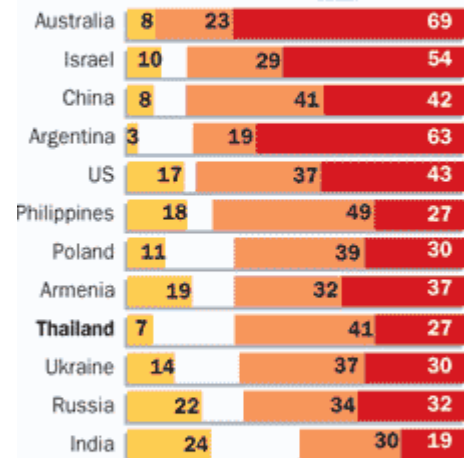
Climate Change: opportunities in crises? A catalyst for change? Good PR for LA as the 'steward of nature'?



VIEWS ON GLOBAL WARMING

An international poll conducted by the World Public Opinion and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2006 showed widespread agreement that climate change is a pressing problem.

This majority, however, is divided over whether the problem of global warming is urgent enough to require immediate, costly measures or whether more modest efforts are sufficient.



WPO/CCGA

- Until we are sure that it is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs
- ... should be addressed, but its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost
- ... a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs



Australian

Thai

The Challenges

Interiorscapes, **mallization** – imposition of alien spaces and the exodus from unpleasant exterior urban landscapes

Advocacy for the **systemic social and ecological spaces**

SEA landscape identity - culturally compounded by 'sociology of absence' and self-discrimination



Source: Sintusingha photo collection

The Challenges: Foodscapes, waterscapes, energyscapes...



Food Miles in Australia:

A preliminary study of
Melbourne, Victoria.

Sophie Gaballa
Asha Bee Abraham

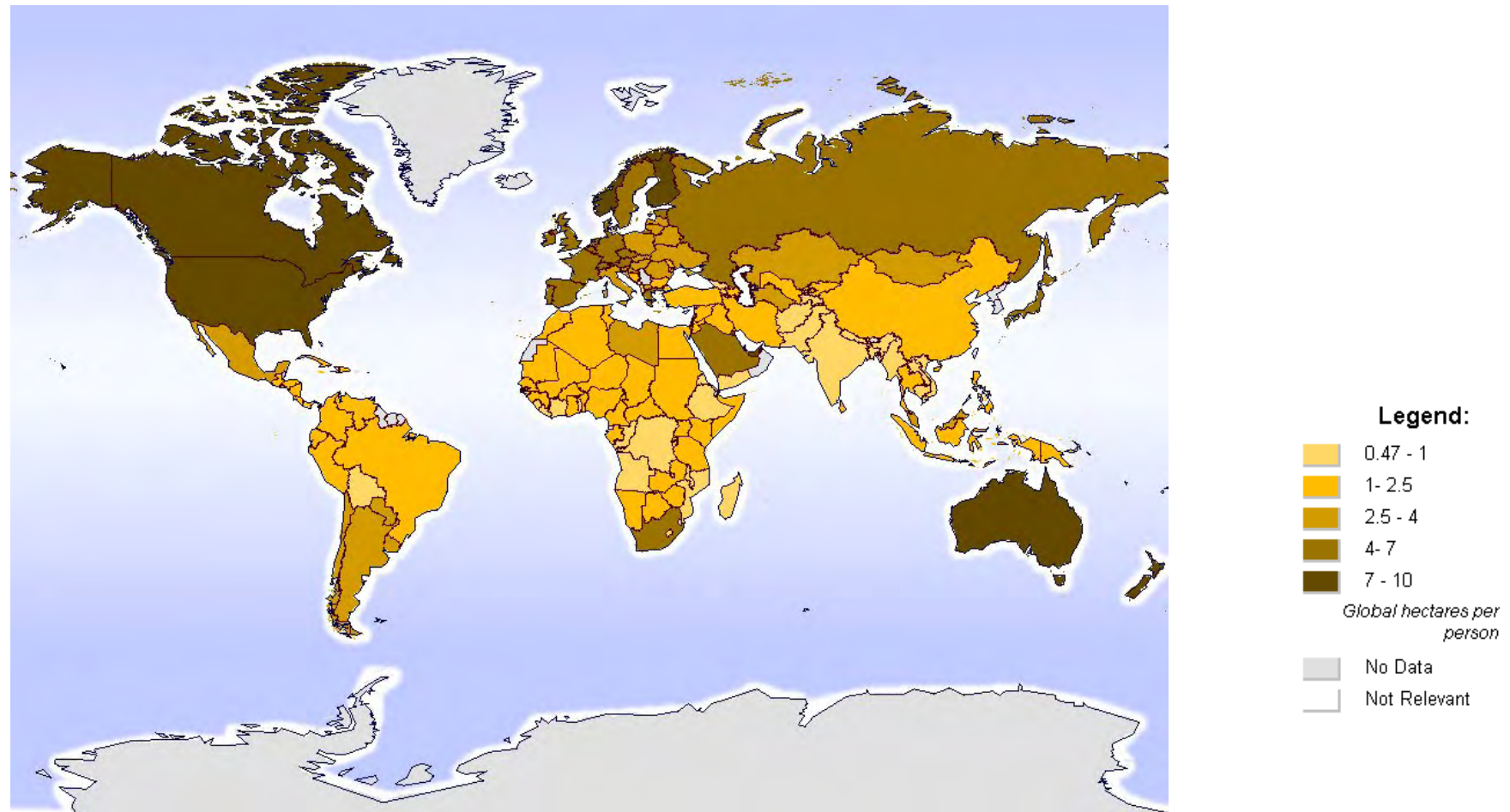
July 2007



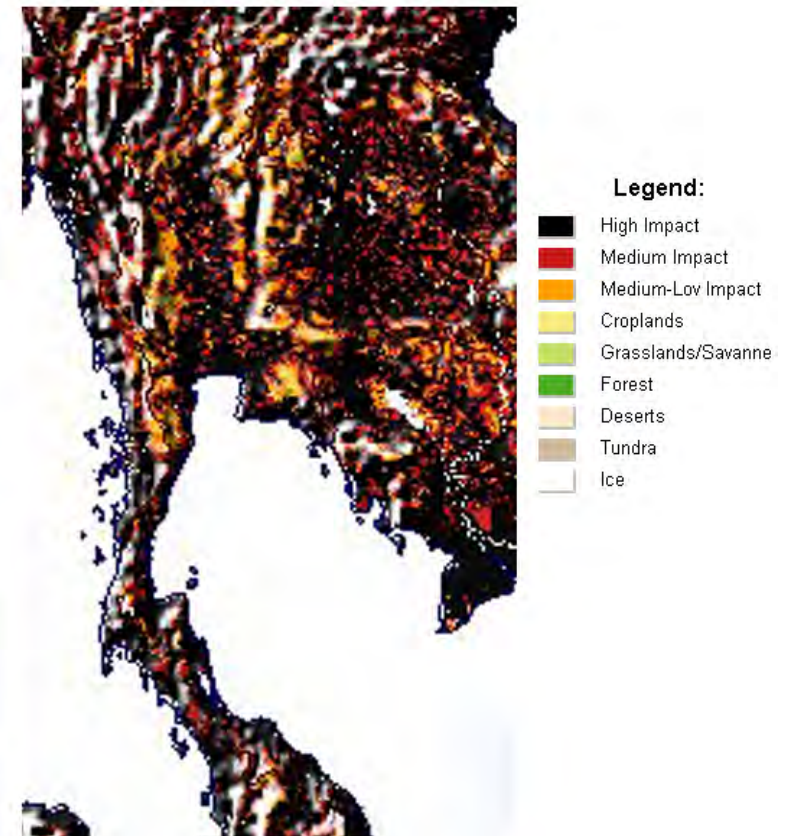
CERES Community Environment Park - Cnr Roberts and Stewart Streets - East Brunswick Vic. 3057
P: +613 9387 2609 F: 9381 1844 E: sophie@ceres.org.au W: www.ceres.org.au



'The individual' and society: Ecological Footprint (1999)



Future 'Landscapes' – the conflict frame 2050



The Challenges: Looking for salvation...

