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IMAGINING EXURBIA:
NARRATIVES OF LAND USE IN THE RESIDENTIAL COUNTRYSIDE

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toronto

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This thesis examines the relationship between exurban residential land use, narratives exurban residents use to describe their land use, and attitudes and motivations implicated in their land uses. The study is predicated on an interest in the ways in which manifestations of the ideals of exurban living shape the aesthetic of the residential countryside and the functions of ecological systems desirable for their amenity value, such as agricultural and pastoral lands and forests. The study is situated in the residential countryside of Toronto, in exurban places which appear to be rural, but which have assumed functions more urban than rural, mostly through increased residence by urbanites. Stories and attitudes about the relationship of exurbanites with their land have been examined along with interpretation of patterns in the landscape. Interpretive, psychological, and ecological frameworks are used to generate a mosaic view of the relationships between exurbanites and their land.
Many thanks to Michael Bunce, Ted Relph and Andy Kenney who have shared their ways of seeing willingly, and whose enthusiasm and insight have deepened my belief that enthusiasm and insight are vital qualities for making places. I am very grateful to all the residents of Toronto's countryside who helpfully showed me around their properties, told me their stories of living there, and answered many difficult questions. I thank my parents, Peter and Ann Cadieux, and my brother Pete for their delight in exploring new forests with me. And I would get nowhere without my husband Colin valiantly carrying the tent so I can consider the landscape.
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Introduction

Interaction with domestic landscapes entails a process of continuous co-creation. Not only do humans shape their environments, but they are also shaped by their environments. Both our behavior and our narratives about self and world are affected by the surroundings in which we find ourselves. In what follows, I describe the process by which I have attempted to elicit a story about the things that exurban residents do with their properties, both from these residents themselves and from the landscapes in question. The landscape of exurbia is a particularly good starting point for trying to understand how humans interact with their domestic environments. The residential countryside tends to be rich in symbolism related to what residents desire from the landscape (Punter 1974, 36). It also exemplifies the uncertain relationship between urban and rural ways of life (70), as it is caught between urban and rural areas functionally and symbolically, and often temporally as well, in the increasingly familiar transition from hinterland to urban fringe. This transition has been so rapid in the region surrounding Toronto that the properties in question, which were deep in the agricultural hinterland when Spectorsky was writing the Exurbanites in New York in 1955, are now fighting titanic political battles to keep the visible edge of the city from coming into sight.

Figure 1.1 Development at the Caledon town line: “FernCrest, Nature’s Best Riverside Homes”
The modest time scale involved between the creation of these properties (severed or subdivided from their original hundred acre farm lots) and their current reification as a landscape in need of preservation\(^1\) presents an opportunity to look at a fairly clear record of what has happened in the landscape. Boundaries and activities written on the palimpsest of the land have not been too obscured by time or many changes of use to prevent one from seeing what kind of landscape has been created by the people who live there now. When describing this landscape, one may say with some certainty that it was created by its current generation of residents.

This exploration of how residents shape their environments and of the processes by which these environments in turn change their residents took the form of a series of questionnaires, land use surveys, and interviews of residents in two areas in Toronto's residential countryside. My inquiry was guided by the three questions:

I. What are the narratives that residents of the countryside use to describe what they do with their land?
II. What are the ways in which they are using their land?
III. What are the attitudes and motivations that seem to be implicated in their land uses?

By examining the relationship between the forces that have produced and which sustain the landscape of the residential countryside, I hope to be able to come to a better understanding of the human experience of landscape. I am especially interested in the phenomenological experience of wanting a piece of land to provide a particular feeling or experience and acting to achieve that goal. My work has been guided by a concern for the sustainability of the exurban landscape treatment. Better understanding of the way in which exurban residents experience and interact with their landscape seemed to be crucial both to the assessment of

\(^1\) Most obvious in the ongoing Save The Oak Ridges Moraine controversy, but also evident in other spheres; see Caledon Countryside Alliance below.
the future potential of exurbia and also to the successful engagement of residents in changes necessary to make their use of land more sustainable.

The participants in this study were exurban residents in what is considered to be the “countryside” outside of Toronto. The information upon which this discussion of relationship with the landscape is based was gathered in the spring and summer of 2001. The properties in this study are fairly large (roughly between two and one hundred acres and averaging nine acres), and they have a high level of “naturalness,” largely because of high tree density and canopy cover. The two areas discussed in this study, the estate residential area north of King City in King Township and the Forks of the Credit area of the Town of Caledon, are more heavily forested than most of southern Ontario (Baker 2001). The properties have been developed mostly within the past fifty years; the average residence length of residents in the study is 18.7 years. Although residents have moved to these areas for a number of reasons, the amenity value, both in terms of nature and of the countryside is high, and explains both the desirability of these areas for residential development and the high property costs.

The history of these areas, of their development, and of the impacts of exurban use of the land between 1954 and 1971 has been meticulously documented by John Punter (1974): I have used Punter’s documentation of King and Caledon as a baseline for change, and I have returned to it frequently to note the changes that have transpired in the intervening thirty years. The scope of this thesis, however, is more specifically oriented to the treatment of landscape, an area of analysis pioneered by Punter, but one which was peripheral to the final recommendations made in his study. A large part of my interest in Punter’s study areas lies

2 Although never published, Punter’s dissertation was submitted (minus the two chapters on landscape treatment crucial to this study) to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Company under the title “The Impact of Exurban Development on Land and Landscape in the Toronto-Centred Region; 1954-1971,” and can be borrowed from the CMHC library through interlibrary loan.
in the opportunities they offer to their residents for engagement with the landscape. Having
decided to live on these large forested properties, which are quite unlike the other residential
choices in metropolitan Toronto and Toronto’s urban field, what are the residents of the
exurbs doing with their properties, and why?

While attempting to establish general patterns of land use within the residential
countryside, I am also examining the ways in which residents explain their land uses, looking
for patterns of motivation. Motivations for moving to exurbs, or migrating into rural-
seeming areas, especially for the amenity value, have been well-established (Boyle and
Halfacree 1998; Bunce 1981; Bunting and Filion 1999; Jobes 2000; Beesley and Walker
1990a; Coppack, Russwurm, and Bryant 1988; Coppack 1988; Sectorsky 1955; Hanson
2000); what this paper seeks to examine are the ways in which these motivations play
themselves out in the pattern of interaction between residents and their property and in the
narratives that are used to explain these interactions.

If residents and communities wish to face the question of sustainability, it is
necessary to gain a clearer understanding of the existing relationship between land use and
ecology. Humans obviously have influence over their environments, but the processes by
which this influence is exerted are often difficult to see and understand. In places that seem
natural, or untouched by humans, it can be even more difficult to understand the connections
between actions and their effects, especially long-term or far-reaching effects. A long-term
goal of this project is to aid the clarification of the effects of exurban living on the
ecosystems of exurbia. A greater understanding of how residents of residential woodlots and
converted agricultural land interact with their environment requires not only more knowledge
about what they are doing from the point of view of ecological cause and effect, but also
about how they understand and explain their relationship with the environment. In gauging
the level at which residents interact with their landscapes, I am particularly interested in ways in which they represent the forest and agriculture, especially in the context of the contributions that these make to the way that the landscape looks and functions.

The relationship between the forest and agriculture, and between these more traditional "rural" land uses and residential use, is not necessarily clear or obvious to a resident, even of a landscape which has had extensive human interventions (Cronon 1995). Much of the study area has been used for agriculture within the past century, and, in addition, much of it has also been planted in trees considerably later. The visibility of these two land uses made it easier to assess the ecological and historical awareness of residents in the context of land use based on their explanations of why the landscape looks as it does. Knowledge about how much residents know, and about how this informs their land-use decisions would be very useful in efforts both to increase residents' appreciation of the historical and ecological processes of a particular place and also to plan or manage for the future, especially in conditions of change.

As this paper deals explicitly with the value of understanding motivations, and the stories we tell ourselves about what we are doing and why, I will begin with my own motivations for this study, in order to make my role as observer and interpreter as clear as possible (Lofland & Lofland 1984). In looking about at the ways in which people live, both in the countryside and in the city, (and in the areas between\(^1\)), and in reading the things that people write to explain what is going on in these areas, I have noticed a seeming discrepancy between the popular imagination of the countryside and the countryside itself. The stories representing the desire to live in the countryside (Jobes 2000), to preserve the countryside

\(^1\) For which we have a profusion of terms: exurbia (SpectorSky 1955), urban-rural fringe, rural-urban fringe, urban field (Coppack, Russwurm, Bryan 1988), rurban areas (Firey 1946), urban district (Wells 1904), ruburbia, list from (Marx 1990)
(DuPuis 1996; Bell 1996), and to exalt the countryside (Perrin 1978) paint an image of the rural idyll that seems contrary to the processes used to achieve it (Dorst 1989). One of the most compelling examples of this discrepancy is commonly evident in exurbs, where a group of residents, dedicated to some idea of countryside, have transformed a piece of forest or farmland into a fairly urban landscape while espousing a story about the desirability of life in the countryside. This has been amply documented (Dorst 1989; Jobes 2000; Lessinger 1991, Spectorsky 1955; Howe, McMahon, & Propst 1997; Kaplan 1984), but despite attempts to reverse this trend (Donahue 1999; Arendt 1994) and to make it explicit (Bell 1996; Davis 1998; Cronan 1995; Marx 1990; Kaplan 1984; Lee 1984), concern about the suburbanization of the countryside seems unabated as exurbs resemble less and less the countryside in whose spirit they are erected (Harrison 1992; Howe, McMahon, & Propst 1997; Johansson 1998; Marx 1990), and as discussion about sustainability becomes increasingly grounded in technical solutions rather than the social, cultural, and political arrangements that underlie our current unsustainable practices (Hanson & Lake 2000).

I can appreciate the desire for a home in the country, and while working on this study, I have come to realize how widely this desire is enjoyed (Champion 1998; Montmarquet 1989). But even aside from the many valid critiques of exurban settlement patterns for ecological, social, and agricultural reasons (to which we will return), it seems unfortunate that people with good intentions and high hopes may be doomed to act out an exurban land use story that is not likely to meet their expectations. Others have documented the problems attendant on the disillusionment that follows this failure (Jobes 2000); this paper will examine some of the processes by which people come to use their exurban properties in the ways that they do and the stories that they tell to explain these uses. Motivating this inquiry is a concept of exurban sustainability predicated on the desirability of sustaining social and
ecological processes in such a way as to support the quality of life that is sought in migration to the countryside (Donahue 1999; Hanson & Lake 2000). My focus is on the sustainability of the landscape, and how, in their relationship with their properties, residents participate in the cultural succession of landscape, that is, the change in the landscape brought about by changes in the stories that describe them.

Hopefully, a better understanding of the physical and narrative aspects of the creation of an exurban aesthetic will help us to address the problems that so many have pointed out as being inherent in the "limited dream" of exurbia (Spector 1955), such as an ideology of consumption, wasteful land use, and high ecological impact. It may also allow for a greater continuum of points at which to become engaged in the processes of place making.

Organizational Structure of the Thesis

The paper has three general sections. The first section (Chapters 1-3) outlines the terminology and frameworks used in the paper. In order to be most clear about the use of terms such as "exurb," "rural," and "narrative," and to indicate where my use of these terms lies in the traditions associated with the study of these ideas, it is necessary first to detail the specific content evoked by each term in the context of this study (Chapter 1). Similarly, the frameworks used to analyse the phenomena of exurban land use and the narratives mediating it need a certain amount of discussion, especially as this study combines approaches from environmental studies and psychology (Chapter 2). For those unfamiliar with landscape interpretation, ecology, or personality psychology, I will give a brief overview of the theoretical frameworks from which my methods are drawn (Chapter 3).

Chapter 4 will describe the specific methods used. In order to try to uncover narratives about how we use land, I have used several approaches. Mixing qualitative and
quantitative approaches and analyses is not without its dangers (McCallum 2001), however, as this is an exploratory study and will hopefully serve as a pilot for a larger study to follow, and as each of the approaches showed promise in some area, it was desirable to test a variety of methods, not only to find how best to answer the questions posed in this study, but also to formulate a methodology suitable for the further research suggested by my findings. Approaching the topic from three distinct traditions, literatures, and methodological philosophies has helped not only to identify interesting phenomena, but also affords more reliable confirmation of interesting trends picked up by more than one method.

Finally, following the description of methods and analysis (Chapter 4), I will discuss results discovered in exurbia, their implications for exurban landscapes and residents (Chapter 5), and the directions for further study suggested by this project, both methodologically and in terms of content (Chapter 6).
CHAPTER 1: EXURBIA AND THE RESIDENTIAL COUNTRYSIDE

“Exurbia” and “Rural”

“Exurbia” is the geographical construct that sets the stage for my inquiry into domestic land use. Exurbs, at this point, have become common enough that I do not need to spend too much time defining the term. Beyond the general connotation of location relative to a major population center, “outside a city and usually beyond its suburbs” (Webster’s, Mish 1990), and of class, “inhabited chiefly by well-to-do families,” exurbs also have aesthetic connotations of larger properties, natural amenity landscapes, and often neotraditional aspects such as neocolonial architecture, village-like clusters, and other hallmarks of the non-modern (and often agricultural) built environment. This aesthetic varies regionally (Dorst 1989; Johansson 1998), but its symbolic content speaks to a desire for some sense of the rural, whether it be the rural of small and cozy communities (traditional architecture, village feel), the rural of some golden age of agriculture (barns, white board fences, horses), or some other rural of the popular imagination. The symbolic function of the landscape is a powerful force here, in addition to its content. The content, an important component of the exurban aesthetic, involves what we will call the narrative of ruralization, a strong story laid out in the landscape and evoking cultural images and stories of farming, agrarian philosophy, independent yeomen, small communities, relationship with nature and a host of other qualities that can be imagined as rural. The function of the landscape as a symbolic force is less clear, but it is a vital part of the process by which landscapes become powerful symbols which in turn shape the substance of landscapes (Meinig 1979; Schama 1995). In this process of becoming, landscapes and the residents of landscapes engage in co-creation cyclically. Residents are drawn to the landscape in part because of qualities which it
embodies for them; having become a part of the functional set of components of the landscape, these residents act in ways that are influenced by these embodied ideas of the landscape, but they also bring their own, potentially independent and unrelated, stories into being in that landscape (Blakely 1984). As the landscape changes, it influences its residents and, especially in demographically expanding areas such as exurbs, draws new residents, in part through the stories evoked by the landscape. This process continues as the way in which all landscapes tend to be formed.  

This process of the interaction of symbolic and functional aspects of the landscape is not new, especially in exurban settlement types. Exurban properties tend to have ample land and space, both culturally and physically, for personal expression; this space, however, is set within a context of cultural narratives governing behavior and ideology in exurbs. These cultural narratives are a major focus of this study, especially in their capacity to encourage ruralization of the landscape. Exurban settlement has often followed the growth of cities; the ancient Greeks had exurbs (Hanson 1995). But the governing stories of exurbs have not always been the same. The early garden cities were unapologetically escapist in their attitude toward living in the city and equally unapologetic in the view of the necessity of the city for making money. Frank Jesup Scott and Andrew Jackson Downing, who between them defined a tremendous proportion of the North American exurban aesthetic, both expressed a realistic view of the necessities of a life dependent upon urban economy, even if the home was to be a haven of repose outside the city. In 1859, Downing clearly differentiated the construction of subjectively rural places (for living) from objective rurality (for growing

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1 This is not true for types of subdivision developments created entirely by a developer who leaves no room for individual expression in the landscape. Although this type of development is sometimes exurban in location and social structure, it tends to be aesthetically quite suburban, or even urban.
things) and Scott’s *Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds* begins with a dismissal of all the “romantic claptrap about the joys of rural life” (cited in Schroeder, 1993, p. 83).

The relationship of the modern exurb to rural life is more coy. Rural ideology is expressed as desirable, and often necessary, if for no other reason than to stave off urban encroachment. Quality-of-life migrants are not only seeking positive rural qualities, but they are clearly also escaping qualities of non-rural life that they find negative. Leo Marx, in “The American Ideology of Space,” delivers a scathing assessment of the forces that have allowed us the liberty to pursue our desire for a countryside life while we flee the clutches of these very forces:

“[Exurbia] exemplifies our continuing propensity to obey centrifugal impulses like those that first populated this nation; our willingness to allow the operation of the market to make crucial choices about land use; our individualistic tolerance for uncoordinated, haphazard development; and, above all, our irrational yoking together of a desire for access to the unspoiled countryside and a persistent disregard for its long-term well-being and survival” (1990, 76).

“Rural,” as a concept, is clearly just as constructed a term as “exurban,” however, “rural” has a longer history and a more clearly defined function. Because I am not, in fact, examining places which are rural (although they had been rural fairly recently), I will not enter deeply into the etymological debate over rural (Pahl 1966; Hoggart 1990; Cloke & Thrift 1994) but rather be content with using a simple definition for the purposes of this paper. Although many countries, notably in Europe, have integrated residential and agricultural places in such a way as to raise serious questions about the definition and boundaries of the “rural” concept, Ontario has, for the most part, kept agricultural and residential land uses so separated that in the areas in question, rural can safely be used to describe places that are primarily agricultural or resource-based rather than residential. This is not an uncontested or unambiguous
concept and, in fact, it has been a constant subtheme in my interactions with the residents of the exurban (and generally non-productivist) study areas, many of whom would like to think of their home areas as rural (see discussion of the interviews in Chapter 5). The importance of the idea of rurality to this study is as an example of the relationship between the thinking of a place (as rural) and the processes of making it so (or of shaping it into something else, based on a narrative idea of "rural").

One of the reasons that the differentiation between rural and residential is so clear in the region around Toronto is the speed with which the city itself has expanded. Much of what is now on the fringes of the downtown of the city was farmland within the memory of residents, and urban expansion into the remaining agricultural areas around the city is constantly visible in all directions (Bunce & Walker 1993). Much has been written about the relationship of the Toronto-centered region to the metropolitan entity of Toronto (Coppack, Russwurm & Bryant 1988; Punter 1974; Walker 1987); as much as possible I would like to focus upon the ruralizing factors in exurban land use rather than on the influence of the urbanizing factors, which are more clearly understood (Platt & Macinko 1983; Troughton 1983; Bunce & Troughton 1984; Beesley & Russwurm 1981; Gottmann 1961).

The Countryside

The "countryside" is a term that has been used by many people who wish to avoid the complications of the ambiguity of the urban fringe (Bunce 1981; Bunce 1994). Although technically "a rural area" (Webster's, Mish 1990), the popular usage (or misusage) of countryside as a more general term for avoiding the complexity evident in the areas in questions is demonstrated by the thesaurus offerings of "scenery," "landscape," and
“geography” (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000). Despite this enormous play in meaning, or perhaps because of it, countryside best describes the residential rural areas of Toronto’s urban field, neither urban nor rural, and in the cases of my study areas, not part of villages, hamlets, or other organizational categories. Although exurban settlement patterns frequently include village and small town forms, Toronto’s urban field has expanded rapidly enough that many of what might have been exurban villages in Punter’s time are now part of the Toronto conurbation, and the more tightly populated areas that might currently be involved in a process of exurbanization are often developed too quickly to really become exurbs; instead they sprout Wal-marts and bedroom subdivisions and become remote suburbs. Consequently, the areas upon which I have focused, which in 1974 Punter called exurbs, or “those areas which are ostensibly rural in landscape terms, but which are inhabited by people who formerly lived...in the city,” (i) are not in towns or villages, nor are they spread out one by one among fields and pastures, but are rather part of a mixed matrix which can be best described as the “residential countryside.” Although parts of the residential countryside are certainly exurban in nature (with all of the cultural baggage that entails), and although there are a variety of patterns under this designation of residential countryside, it is but one set of a range of forms that exurbs can take. I will confine the greater part my discussion to the exurban pattern of the residential countryside rather than the larger category of exurb, although we will return to exurban development in general.

Having narrowed the focus thus far, I may discuss the constituent parts of the residential countryside. For the purposes of my study, the basic unit is the residential property. This is a happily simple unit: a piece of land, usually surrounding a house, and in the context of the study areas of Caledon and King, within a landscape matrix of fields,

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2 Roget’s ignores the concept, and all related concepts, entirely.
pasture, and forest. In most cases, a yard surrounds the house and there is some transition in the area further away from the house into the landscape matrix or adjacent land uses; a common example would be a lawn surrounding the house with a border of flowers and shrubs between the lawn and the forest that encloses both lawn and house. Within this simple pattern are a tremendous number of opportunities to shape the domestic landscape, and I have examined the patterns of use and transition of the yard and property (see Chapter 5, Property section).
Chapter 2: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LANDSCAPE

Narrative engagement with the landscape

Christopher Alexander, in The Timeless Way of Building, goes to great pains to describe “the quality without a name” (1979). I can not begin to attempt to reconstruct his description of this elusive quality (and to try to name it would be disrespectful to his intention), but it resembles the wistful aspect of the experience of joie de vivre. In a moment of life lived to full capacity, there exists a certain longing for its extension. The knowledge (and acceptance) of finitude and change, and the realization that one will have to strive for the next unpredictable moment of such joy in living, all contribute to this quality without a name, which, in Alexander’s view, is the elusive motivator that shapes the meaningful aspects of our built environment. The experience of moments when life seems to be fully lived, or of seemingly clear images of a desirable future moment, has a significant effect on our motivational structures. This is often a somewhat implicit effect of which we are not necessarily rationally aware. Our culture reifies these ideal images or experiential goals, partly because they are an integral part of human experience, but additionally because they are important grist for the image-driven media aspect of our culture. For example, ideal images of goals states involving experiencing the countryside become especially apparent in advertising. These bits of information that are transmitted through cultural media such as advertising images, literary storylines, and movie sets are important sources of content for both our aesthetic of the way something such as the countryside should look and also of our understanding of how we should behave in order to achieve the compelling experience described.
Although themes of moral narrative function of landscape are easier to identify and analyze in literary traditions such as the pastoral (Magowan 1988), or in landscape painting (Schama 1995), landscape narratives that tell us what to do also permeate less structured narratives with potentially larger audiences. In Michael Bell’s “Stone Age New England” (1996), he describes an excellent example of implicit moral narratives. In the section “Landscapes of the Mind,” Bell details how accepted explanations of the decline of farming in New England (the stoniness of the soil, hilliness, and the moral decline of farming) were somewhat deceiving. Although these themes might not have been patently false, the actual decline was based much more on implicit norms of the cultural desirability of urban living (and inversely, the shame of rural living), the competitive and prestigious pull of employment in cities, and the rising value of land for urban uses rather than the more widely blamed reasons of the common cultural narrative. Bell demonstrates how widely ideas of bad soil, etc. have been circulated in songs, poems, and policy, and how effective these media have been in passing down not only their misleading content, but also their motivational subtext. These subtle narratives give approval to converting agricultural land to urban uses (practical and amenity) and to depending on agribusiness instead of traditional local agriculture. Moreover, in replacing historical knowledge such as knowledge of policy tradeoffs preserving the agricultural and urban status quo (in the interest of business), or of the recency of viable agriculture in so-called “abandoned” locations, with mythic imagination of the past, narratives can carry a moral imperative. Thus, moral narratives can influence the direction of cultural change and adaptation by effacing awareness of the possibility of alternatives to the dominant narrative.
If, as Bell asserts, this narrative interference in traditional local processes is hindering otherwise plausible and desirable land uses (such as continuance of the market garden agriculture that flourished in Boston's urban field until the second World War), it would be desirable to be able to examine and make explicit these subtly shaping stories in order to confront their effects and to smooth the way for new, more sustainable ideas about land use. However, fiddling with the stories upon which our everyday assumptions about the world are based is not a matter to be lightly approached. Narratives organize our behavior and regulate our emotions—in other words, they tell us what to do, and how to feel about it. If the story that tells us what to do is disrupted, we risk being in a position where we don't know what to do; this is an inherently anxiety provoking condition. Campbell (2000) discusses the problem of facing such ingrained narratives:

"mere evidence contradicting a dominant narrative is not sufficient to overturn it. The only way to do so is to create a plausible counter-narrative, one which is either completely new or an alteration/adaptation of the existing narrative."

In examining the narratives that landowners use to mediate their relationship with their land, I have been looking not only for the dominant narratives, but also for new or adapted narratives that seem to reflect positive directions for the sustainability of the residential countryside. Despite common condemnation of low density housing and urban sprawl, the development of the past hundred years has demonstrated that H. G. Wells' (1904) predictions about the demand for living in a landscape "more abundantly wooded, breaking continually into park and garden, and with everywhere a scattering of houses" (53) was well founded, and some ways to create this landscape must be more sustainable than others.
If the desire for living in the countryside is not particularly new, neither are the narratives that describe it or efforts to make it better. By discussing the sustainability of the residential countryside in terms of narratives, I do not wish to suggest that new stories for living in the countryside are the missing link for sustainability. Rather, I want to emphasize the importance of cultural transmission of stories and of understanding the role and formation of narratives as mediators of aesthetic and moral experience of landscape. Culture can be interpreted from a narrative perspective, and as grand failures such as the Soviet Union and the Cultural Revolution show, cultural structures are incredibly complex and difficult to replace (Hobsbawm 1993). Campbell qualifies her call for plausible counter-narratives with Adams and Hulme’s caution: “Counter-narratives have to be as parsimonious, plausible and comprehensible as the original” (Adams & Hulme 1998, 4). In order to even start to think about the kind of narratives or counter-narratives needed to sustain the residential countryside, it is first necessary for both researchers and residents to understand the form and content of the narratives currently at work.

Conceptual engagement with the landscape

Engagement with the landscape is clearly an intensely personal process, and a comprehensive explanatory framework for this process is far beyond the scope of this paper. A few points are worth noting, however, because they highlight opportunities within the current North American ethic and practice of land use for increased engagement and demonstrate how a higher level of personal and societal engagement with the landscape contributes to the long term quality of environment and lives of residents.
The relationship with landscape is one which operates both on an explicit, or rational, linguistic level, at which we are analytically aware of our goals, aspirations, and behaviors, and also on an implicit and experiential level, at which information is processed largely as sensory information and emotion. This experiential system can be closely linked or widely separate from our rational understanding of our experience (Epstein 1994). The harmonious operation of these two systems is fundamental not only to personal satisfaction, but also to an honest understanding of one’s motivations. If experiential and rational modes of understanding the world are in agreement, it is easier to work toward goals. Experience in the landscape tends to be related to the aesthetic or sensory (experiential) system, while planning for the landscape falls into the rational realm of thought. This separation is encouraged by Western culture, and although both systems inform and enrich the other, it is fully possible to alienate rational explanations and plans from aesthetic impulses and appreciation of landscape (Tuan 1989). This is relevant to the political will necessary for addressing questions of a sustainable countryside, especially because experience of the countryside often entails conflicting motivations such as the desire to enjoy the aesthetic and emotional experience of living in the countryside (Hammitt 1982) as well as the convenience of urban benefits, such as the stable planning afforded by city employment (Gottmann 1961).

Frameworks for engagement with the landscape offer an important set of methods by which one might be able to bring rational and experiential systems of thinking about the landscape closer together. This is most obvious in hands-on schemes, such as the community farms and forests described in Donahue’s (1999) *Reclaiming the Commons*. Residents of an exurban town are reclaiming the agricultural, pastoral and forest features in their landscape by participating in some of the processes that support these desirable aspects of their home.
place. Doing things with the land and thinking about it helps to reconcile systems of experience and thought. A negative expression of this idea is Relph’s (1976) idea of placelessness, an idea exemplified by wholesale subdivision creation. Entire swaths of homes and domestic landscapes are created all at once with no input from their future residents, and with very little room for personal interaction with the domestic landscape on the part of the residents (Relph 1981). With no room for change or tinkering, these settlement patterns fail to develop much of a sense of place, and one of the most commonly cited reasons for living in the exurban region of my study was the contrast the residential countryside offered to that type of placeless environment. This is less immediate within the boundaries of my study area but salient because of the looming urban presence of at the borders.

One of the most basic reasons both for living in exurbia and for studying it is the potential it offers for place making. In both physical and cultural contexts, exurban properties present the opportunity to make a place one’s own in an exaggerated way. On two acres, entire landscapes can be created, landscapes which can exclude the rest of the world at will; almost 90% of the surveyed properties in this study had screening tree lines along the boundaries. What does this say about the forces motivating people to use their properties? As Marx (1990) has noted (above), it could indicate a thoughtless ethic of land use based on immediate gratification and with no concern for the future. However, as Donahue (1999) has pointed out, most of us live in places defined by this kind of thoughtless land use. The way in which we will redeem it is not so much by scrupulous effort to protect remaining wild areas that have been spared by placelessness, but by becoming active participants in the use of the land on which we already live (6-9).
**Sustainability**

"We argue that the primary barriers to sustainability are social, cultural, and political rather than technical. Conceptualizing sustainability solely as a technical problem obscures the social, cultural, and political arrangements underlying existing unsustainable practices and implies that sustainability is possible while leaving in place those underlying relationships" (Hanson & Lake 2000).

Sustainability has become an unwieldy concept, not least because it represents a goal state we would like to achieve without really having any concept of how to go about it. Consequently, we muddle it up with political language that reifies our desire to achieve sustainability and also our total inability to do so. Despite this, sources across diverse fields have come up with manageable ways to discuss sustainability, usually by breaking the larger concept into smaller, more achievable goal units. Aspects of sustainability in the context of the residential countryside have become important organizing principles for this thesis. Donahue’s (1999) description of the four guiding principles of Land’s Sake, Weston’s community farm, offers a starting place for discussing the relationship between engagement in and sustainability of the landscape.

"Ecology addresses the issue of sustainable use of land, in the very broadest (and hence most exacting) sense of that term. Economics examines how each project endeavors to pay for itself, as far as is possible given the current market. Education relates how people, particularly young people, become involved with the land. Esthetics explores the small ways in which engaging with the land satisfies the soul, even in the midst of the suburbs. How we do what we do emerges from the tensions among these imperatives.” (xvi)

As these four principles are related to a project, the community farm, and not to a more complex unit such as an entire community, the complement of ecology, economics, education, and aesthetics may not be considered all aspects of the goal of exurban sustainability. Rather, it addresses a smaller subset: a project designed to start the process of engagement with the landscape that is necessary for successfully taking on the goal of
sustainability. Other authors have offered interpretations of sustainability with a similar structure. These models come from fields as diverse as soil conservation (Lowrance 1990), agricultural economics (Meridith 1975), and sociology (Jobes 2000), and provide a sound base upon which to elaborate questions concerning exurban sustainability. In the table below, several of these sustainability models are presented according to the factors into which they have been broken. I have attempted to line them up according to their commonalities (Troughton 1995). The lines along which the categories are distinguished are determined partly by their academic context; this table categorizes aspects of sustainability in order to demonstrate a potential for discussing concepts of sustainability in a more concrete way.

Table 2.1 Sustainability Factor Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal factors underlying sustainability</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction and Change</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Planning</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Ambiance</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services/ Opportunities for Success</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology/ Agronomy</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microeconomy</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/ Community</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroeconomy</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life - environmental</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community self-determination</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life - cultural</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services/ Economic Structures, Distribution</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity/Restraint</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony with nature</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology/ Agronomy</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Local Communities</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian Husband/Gardener</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralisation &amp; Downsizing</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-Scale, Healthful Farming</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esthetics</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Chiappe and Flora are adding onto the existing Beus and Dunlap model</td>
<td>IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chiappe and Flora are adding onto the existing Beus and Dunlap model
Analysis of the above sources led me to organize my questions about the experience of the residential countryside in a factored way. Factor and cluster analysis of the results of the test runs of my questionnaire (described in Chapter 4) confirmed this grouping of items. The five categories which I have used are laid out in Table 2.2, along with the topics comprising each category.

Table 2.2 Five Categories of Exurban Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecology</td>
<td>Environmental awareness/effort</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest in/Stewardship of Natural Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community</td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identity</td>
<td>Identity/Ruralness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction/Change</td>
<td>General Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ideology</td>
<td>Escapism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will return to the individual components that make up each topic and to the way in which this model (hereafter referred to as the sustainability factor model) underlies the design of the project in Chapter 4.

Exurban communities face a complex interrelationship between local and extra local forces in many spheres (economic, cultural, ecological, governmental, educational, service provision). The challenge of reconciling the often conflicting processes of the practically appealing city and the ideologically appealing countryside defines the focus of change in exurban communities, which are almost always located within the periurban zone. A model of sustainability for exurban communities necessarily must address the major spheres of
change and must also address how residents envision a stable future. The following are just a few of the issues that would need to be encompassed by a model of sustainability.

The idea of sustainability, although currently a popular ideological goal, is highly dependent on cultural constructions of the way things should be and on the power relations between groups whose ideas of the way things should be might differ. Exurban landscapes are often defined by amenities such as countryside, forests, and services. The production and sustenance of these amenities depends upon residents of or employees in an exurban area who may not share in the affluent lifestyle characteristic of exurbia. Although exclusivity may be a desirable characteristic for some residents, it is problematic: whose model of sustainability will be represented and manifested in the processes of planning for the future?

Many exurban residents are part of a trend of urban-to-rural migration (Davis, Nelson, & Dueker 1994). Cultural idealization of the countryside has a downside of unrealistic expectations and the potential of disillusionment. Smaller communities are impacted heavily by high rates of transient residence. Exurban communities marked by high amenity landscapes and an aesthetic of rural living increasingly experience the upheaval created by the illusions and disillusionment of short-lived enthusiastic newcomers (Jobes 2000). The combination of high expectations and low knowledge of the processes of the countryside requires a careful consideration of the goals set achieving sustainability.

To define exurban sustainability, it will be necessary to gain an appreciation for the goals of people who move to exurban places. Quality of life is clearly an important aspect of an exurban migration. This applies both to cultural quality of life and also to environmental quality of life. Residents of exurban places are often willing to increase a commute or at least to sacrifice some of the conveniences of more developed areas in favor of their exurban
aesthetic. This is a component of the anti-development attitude of exclusivity, a "shut-the-gate behind me" attitude or "last comers" or "last settlers syndrome" (Clay 1980; Lee 1984). Issues of accessibility and low-income housing are complicated and will be an important part of the discussion about the role of exurbs in the future, but more clear cut development issues are raised by the placement of exurbia and the expressed choices of exurban residents (Troughton 1983). If the appeal of an exurban community lies in its lack of development (this will often include unimproved roads, lack of services such as sewers, and lack of large-scale retail and strip mall development), how can this appeal be maintained in the conditions of growth that many exurban communities are experiencing? Although this question may be more comprehensively addressed at a planning level (Davis, Nelson & Dueker 1994), it may also be addressed at a residential scale: how can residents who choose to move to an exurban community for explicit reasons participate in reifying or sustaining the attributes of that place?

The question of sustainability is usually used to refer to the environmental realm, and of course the environmental context is crucial for any aspect of landscape, but issues of sustainability also apply to the cultural narratives that shape and sustain a landscape. Some narratives (or cultures) are very stable, both in sustaining themselves through transmission and also in the long-term potential for the behaviors mediated through the narratives. Others are more temporary, well-suited for the achievement of a short-term goal, but offering little beyond that end point. Many cultural narratives which would have been stable in a less populated world (or countryside) are made temporary by the context of population density or some other limiting factor in which they exist.
A potential discrepancy exists in the narrative of desire to live in the countryside, beyond the frequently noted fact that it is a story that would work for the few, but not for the many (Kaplan 1984). Most of the content of this narrative seems to be up front, in the lure of living in the countryside, while little is offered to those who achieve this initial goal. But what good is a story that lands you in a desired goal state and then abandons you there? By talking to residents who had achieved residence in the countryside (almost all of them had moved from the city) about why they had moved and what their experience of the countryside has been, I hoped to be able to get a sense of how cultural instructions were operating in the residential countryside.
Chapter 3: FRAMEWORKS FOR APPROACHING RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE

Questions surrounding the rise of the exurbs, or the production of rural spaces within possible commuting distance of urban population centers, have been a steady theme of landscape, agricultural, and development literature, although the actual achievement of this best of both worlds was probably never as widespread as it is currently believed to be. At the beginning of the twentieth century in a collection of essays titled “Rural Economics,” Cornell professors of agriculture warned “city persons wishing to farm” of the pitfalls disguised in the appealing cultural image of the rural life. One of these, Professor Warren, provides a good place to begin in his thoughtful discussion on how to achieve the benefits of rural life, such as good health, without succumbing to the appealing illusions that had ruined so many city persons who had come out to the rural areas of upstate New York to participate in rural life, but who were prepared with only vague ideas about the joys of rural life (rather than the how-to’s). I am deliberately framing this section in this context of the difference between enjoying the benefits of life in the countryside (perceptions of clean air, ample space, safety, etc.) and supporting the processes that make the countryside what it is. However, I do not want to generate an impression of naïve urban consumers who cannot understand why the countryside is disappearing under the wheels of their sport utility vehicles. Although these individuals certainly exist, many of the residents involved in my study were aware, to some extent, of their simultaneous participation in an urban economy and consumption of a rural aesthetic. Warren’s cautionary article about enjoying country life was directed more toward those who would abandon urban pursuits entirely in an effort to become part of the rural economy and ideology – the solutions he discusses are pragmatic ways in which to behave in order to be able to balance enjoyment of the countryside with support of its continued
existence, what we would today term sustainability. Warren was able to recommend concrete behavioural examples: work on a farm before investing in one; make sure that your family is genuinely interested in rural life and work; begin closer to population centers in order to supplement a new rural occupation with the urban one in which the aspirant has expertise; buy land with good soil. Warren’s frame of reference was more limited in 1916, largely because of the lack of widespread automobile transportation. The scale of the transitional area between what might theoretically be called urban and rural pursuits has expanded tremendously, but I do not think that Warren’s advice is outdated in spirit. The frameworks discussed below are all oriented toward gathering knowledge in order to apply it to the problem of sustainability, and to balancing the possibility of enjoyment of the countryside with its continued existence, both as an aesthetic place for the sort of enjoyment exemplified by exurban residence (and by the extensive enjoyment of the amenities of the countryside by urban people) and also for the fundamental agricultural and resource production that has always defined the countryside (and supported the urban areas in its midst).

The Frameworks

In this section, I will describe the frameworks which I have used to structure this thesis. Within the larger context of exurban sustainability, I have used four sets of more specific frameworks: practical, interpretive, ecological and psychological. This allows me to begin with the way that this type of study has been done in the past and to explain the approaches that I am borrowing from different sources. After explaining the type of approach that has been taken, I can move onto the interpretive background for some of these approaches, especially for the interpretation of narrative and landscape. Having given an explanation of the overall approach and the theoretical tools used to penetrate the subject,
enough information is present to allow me to move onto the ecological frameworks, or the assessment of patterns on the ground, and a brief discussion of the desirability of different types of patterns. Finally, I will describe the psychological frameworks that assist in looking at the types of behaviours involved in generating the ecological patterns.

**Practical framework**

John Punter's 1974 dissertation "Urbanites in the Countryside" (the CMHC report "The Impact of Exurban Development on Land and Landscape in the Toronto-Centred Region; 1954-1971") provides a clear starting point. Punter asked many of the questions with which this study is concerned and he looked at the same sort of exurban development in the same places. I have used Punter's study areas, his "Variables and Classifications Utilised in the Analysis of Landscape Treatment" (Appendix V), and I have chosen approaches to the analysis of aerial photographs and the landscape based in part on his report of methodological successes and failures. Although I am building upon the work done by Punter, I have not limited myself to his approaches, nor have I attempted to cover more than a small fraction of the angles comprehensively discussed in his report. Punter's assessment of the forces of change in the countryside was perceptive and many of his conclusions remain current and pertinent today (despite the fact that they have neither been made available nor been acted on by the agency which commissioned the report), and it has been a valuable resource in approaching the landscape and land uses of King and Caledon. Punter limited himself to research based on archival sources and first-hand landscape interpretation (his sources ranged from aerial photographs, property maps, and tax rolls to photographs taken of the landscape at 1/10 mile intervals, at the average head height of a driver); I have tried to balance my own interpretation of the landscape with the narrative interpretation offered in semi-structured
interviews with residents. For this approach, I have turned to Patrick Jobes, whose twenty year longitudinal study of quality of life migration into Bozeman, Montana is described in Moving Nearer to Heaven: the illusions and disillusions of migrants to scenic rural places (2000). Jobes interviewed residents of Bozeman at intervals of a few years, asking them about their expectations in moving to Bozeman and about how their experience progressed in relation to their expectations. Jobes' inquiry examines the ways in which popular representations of Bozeman as a mountain paradise influenced the expectations of would-be residents about what aspects of Bozeman they would be able to consume, but did not necessarily create an opportunity for these quality-of-life migrants to realize their expectations.

Finally, for a general approach to reading a place and the relationship of its residents to that place, I have drawn heavily on the phenomenological method and plurality of viewpoints used by Dorst (1989) in his Written Suburb. Although he, like Punter, relies heavily on his own interpretation of the texts of the landscape in Chadds Ford, his synthesis of these texts tells a very interesting story of the kind of interactions that residents create for themselves, and I have tried to approach the towns of Caledon and King with a similar eye toward gleaning the imagined layers of meaning written on the landscape.

**Landscape Interpretation**

In order to read the landscape, I turned to the methods of J. B. Jackson, Donald Meinig, Peirce Lewis, Grady Clay, Ted Relph, and Christopher Alexander. Using texts most relevant to my questions, I tried to distill the advice given by each in describing how to look at the landscape into sets of questions that would guide my inquiry, both theoretically and
empirically, as I went out to look at the landscape, and to talk to the people who lived in it. The specific questions are included in Appendix A, but I will include a general description of each set.

J. B. Jackson's (1984) concern in "Concluding with Landscapes" is to define just what vernacular means; the focus of his set of questions is the balance, conflict, and compromise between landscapes of authority and vernacular landscapes. As such, the questions focus mostly on abstract concepts as they are displayed in the landscape: goals (preservation), mobility (ephemera, change), sanctity of place, primacy of social networks. Based on the four questions: who owns this space, who uses this space, how was it formed, and how does it change, Jackson makes a case for our need for and creation of landscapes as "the place where we establish our own human organization of space and time" (156). Consequently, the bias of the questions moves beyond a comprehensive picture of a particular landscape and what is there to the cultural forces that created the place and the essence of an idea drawn from the landscape.

Although the broad and abstract nature of Meinig's (1979) questions in "The Beholding Eye" and "Symbolic Landscapes" make them seem awkward to use for landscape analysis, they are in fact the best starting point for assessing how other people experience landscape. Meinig first gives ten versions of the same scene, ten ways to see landscape: as nature, wealth, system, etc. His essay on the symbolic nature of landscape then transforms these potential views of nature into possible motivators, ways of seeing that inform what we do in relation to the landscape. This set would not be as appropriate if I were relying solely on landscape interpretation to answer my questions, but since I have also interviewed the residents of the places, these questions are a valuable intermediary between what people
think of their place and what they do with it – how it exhibits their perceptions of the world, in other words. Based on what people identify as the most important aspects of a place to them, it will be interesting to see whether it is possible to see traces of the landscape as one of Meinig’s ten versions, and to assess how people are relating to their places in a symbolic way. Most of these questions will be most relevant for the interpretation of the interviews in relation to the landscape assessment, but it will be important to include enough information about each property to assess conformity to one of the versions; consequently, a set of indicator questions about the ten versions will be included.

Peirce Lewis’s (1979) “axioms for reading the landscape” make a good starting place for methodically reading the landscape, but questions such as those about landscape as a clue to culture are more appropriate for a larger scale of landscape than for individual properties. This set, like Meinig’s, will be useful for interpreting what I find out about places, especially about groups of places, but all of the categories are covered by questions from the other sets, so none of the Axioms themselves need to be included in my set of criteria.

Clay’s (1980) yardsticks, insights, and mental tools look for patterns that reveal the use, agency, identity, nature and meaning of a place. The questions reveal a journalistic interest in the world and coalesce around centres of meaning such as indicators of consumption, boundaries for inclusion/exclusion, rules of identity, and patterns of movement and information exchange. These questions are very human-centred and seek to glean the most information from a once-over catalogue of a rich place, making them very useful for the cataloging and interpretation of the catalog of landscape.

The Relph (1976) set of questions, from *Place and Placelessness*, is characterized by a search for the meaning of the place, and is comprised of questions about visual and symbolic
features that display or evoke engagement and cultural experience. The questions focus on how a place is experienced; what the components of a place create in a person’s experience and how a person’s actions can be exhibited (and consequently interpreted) as part of a place. A general bias in the set is toward places that have been made by long-term human habitation: gently made places.

In *The Timeless Way of Building* and *The Pattern Language*, Christopher Alexander (1979) discusses the underlying patterns of the built environment, and the problems that follow when these patterns are neglected. One of the major processes of modernization, in his view, has been the erosion of rules of thumb for how to do things that were so implicit that their disappearance has not been explicitly noticed, despite mounting critiques of placelessness, lack of humanity or soul in modern and postmodern built environments, and the general Western glorification of old architectures. Although my study is neither fine grained enough nor architecturally oriented enough to use his pattern language, my search for patterns in residential landscapes and the apprehension of residential landscapes has been fortified by Alexander’s explication of the deep implicitness of the patterns and our experience of them.

Alexander’s approach offers a way to apply the narrative framework discussed in the first chapter to the non-built environment. Methods of acting in the landscape and the records left by these activities can be interpreted in terms of the moral narrative content explicated by Bell (1996). This approach is especially useful for interpreting things that are done or ways of doing things that are so implicitly accepted as to be too obvious to come up interviews.
"The way things are done" is a remarkably powerful force in the shaping of the non-built environment (Jackson 1985), perhaps even more so than in architecture, because even those who hire a landscaper, gardener, or landscape architect to help shape their properties can still engage with the landscape at a wide range of levels, from deciding that (and when) the lawn shall be mowed, to planting flowers or trees and framing views out windows, to dramatic acts of earth shaping such as actual terraforming (which is remarkably common in residential properties). The landscape is much more changeable, in the context of day-to-day opportunities for interaction, than the built environment. Cutting the grass, planting impatiens, and sweeping the driveway can all have dramatic effects with very little investment, forethought, or explanation. Certain decisions about what is done with property are more accessible than others: the landscaper was recommended by a friend; we planted oaks instead of maples because the tree guy told us the soil would be better for oaks; I'm naturalizing the back quarter of my lot because I want a place to walk that reminds me of the natural places of my boyhood. But these are the remarkable decisions; the everyday patterns often fall into the category of the way things are done.

The implicit nature of knowledge about the way things are done can be problematic in more ways than just for the purposes of research. There are often excellent reasons for the ways that things have always or commonly been done. But the difference between understanding the dynamics of the landscape and responding to them mindfully, and just doing the thing that has always been appropriate in the past can become apparent under conditions of change. Totally implicit worldviews tend to be better suited to situations of relative stability, when change will not render the assumptions upon which cultural procedural knowledge is based obsolete. The exurban landscape is the most dynamic,
expanding, and fastest changing landscape in northern North America at present (Davis, Nelson & Dueker 1994). It is in this context of change that I am seeking to understand the motivational assumptions about what is done with exurban residential properties, even despite the challenges of examining implicit knowledge.

Ecological Frameworks

The approaches to landscape interpretation described above have helped me to see patterns of motivations of behaviour in the record of what has been done with the land. From what people think about what they do with the land, I will now turn to what is actually done with the land. To say that I am using ecological frameworks to organize this paper may be somewhat misleading, especially in the context of “sustainability.” I would like to use ecological frameworks as they could be used by ecologists to improve the ecological balance of exurban settlement patterns, but while that is the direction in which I hope this research will continue, it is outside the scope of the current project. Here, I am discussing the human ecology of exurban settlements and the ecological frameworks used in this project are of a descriptive nature, noting the constituent parts of the landscape. Suggestions have been included for increasing the sustainability of exurban settlement while making more effort to meet the needs of the land uses that compete with residential settlement in the countryside such as agriculture and forestry, but, in general, ecology is interpreted through the lens of the human narratives used to understand and experience it.

Psychological Frameworks

"The urbanite's love affair with the American forest is a subject with complex psychological roots, many classic manifestations in literature and art, and quite
varied political results. I mention it here to acknowledge its importance, and to admit that its analysis is quite beyond my disciplinary competence.” (Healy 1984:18)

I have encountered many promising sources of insight into the relationship by which landscapes and their inhabitants participate in a constant dynamic of co-creation and mutual adaptation. I have been disappointed by many of these sources, mostly because they conclude abruptly with an apology that although this is a fascinating and no doubt fruitful line of research, it falls too far beyond the ken of the author’s professional discipline, and that he or she hopes fervently that someone else will take it up. Many other authors have unwittingly repeated Punter’s sentiments: “Any attempt to grapple with questions of motivation demands a complex psychologically-based research procedure that is well beyond the scope of this thesis and the author’s expertise” (1974, 436). He continued, however, “This is not to argue that such questions are not fundamental to the ultimate goal of understanding man in the landscape.”

Environmental psychology has begun to address basic questions of the human-environment relationship. In this paper I will use basic psychological models of goal-oriented behaviour, or motivation, and also of the ways in which human behaviour (which we have described as an important factor in ecology) is mediated by the narratives that we use to explain to ourselves what it is that we are experiencing, and what it means (Gergen and Gergen 1988). Along with the frameworks for motivation and narrative, I will focus on the phenomenon of experience. The lack of explanatory depth in the responses to my interview questions about the experience of residential landscapes and about the motivations and processes by which they are shaped has prompted me to turn to psychological explanations in
order to describe more accurately the processes involved in experiencing landscape and the desire to experience a potential landscape.

Some of the difficulties in asking residents to describe their behaviors and experience of their property in the context of motivations and influences lie in the fact that it is difficult to explain our behaviors without relying on an often post hoc narrative that makes what we have done make sense. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) review a number of studies demonstrating that people are often unable to report things that have demonstrably influenced their decisions or behavior, or in cases where they did report influences, their reports were often demonstrably false. They make the case that many of the things that influence our choices, opinions, and behaviors are imperfectly accessible to our conscious awareness.

These are the frameworks that informed the way in which I approached my questions about the residential countryside. In the following chapter, I present these approaches and their methodological details.
Chapter 4: METHODS

Project Introduction

Information about land use in the residential countryside was collected using interviews of the residents, survey questionnaires about their attitudes and beliefs about a variety of topics relating to land use and motivation, and landscape observation on-site and using aerial photographs. The information gathered using these three methods was assembled and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods in order to find patterns in the relationship between what residents are doing with their land, their stories about what they are doing with their land, and their attitudes and motivations relating to land use. In this section, I will describe the methods with which this study was conducted, the rationale for these methods, and the ways in which the information gathered using these methods was interpreted and analyzed.

Several parameters contributed to the delineation of the scope of this project. The work that John Punter had done in the early seventies on his Urbanites in the Countryside enabled me to begin with a clear baseline against which to measure change. The fact that he asked many of the same questions that I am asking about the shaping of the landscape by cultural forces and the impact of exurban aesthetics on the landscape added to the incentive to work within the study areas in which he had collected so much information. Furthermore, as I will discuss in more detail in the next section, by 1997, the Caledon and King sites had become even more symbolic of the tension between urban and rural systems and of the exurban attempt to resolve that tension than they had been in 1971 – the town line of both communities is (currently) a visible end to expanding development from the Torontoward municipalities.
Punter had chosen the years 1954 and 1971 as end points for his study not only because these dates flanked interesting change, but also because extensive aerial photography had been done in each of those years by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) for the Lands and Forests Inventory. These photographs were updated between 1996 and 1998 by the OMNR and I was able to use these photographs as well as recent sets taken by the Town of Caledon and the Regional Municipality of York. My end date is not as final as Punter’s; the Planning Act in 1971 dramatically changed the pattern of development in Toronto’s countryside, but no such legislation has yet marked the most recent curbing of Toronto’s outward spread. The increasingly protectionist ideology cloaking the residential countryside makes a temporally broader snapshot possible, so although the interviews were all collected in 2001, much of the background information (aerial photographs, boundary maps, etc.) is three to four years older.

The availability of good records was another limiting parameter. The Town of Caledon has compiled a large database of public property records layered onto the most recent set of color aerial photos. They have not yet made this resource available to the public, however, so despite the fact that some of the information might have been useful (Punter devoted a large proportion of his attention to property and ownership records), it was not worth the time it would have taken to reconstruct these records which will become publicly available later this year (when I will be continuing this study). Thus, the scope of this paper will be limited to the change in the landscape between 1971 and the late 1990’s, and to the narrative and motivational aspects of the land usership without delving deeply into patterns of landholding or real estate fluctuations.

The participants for this study were selected based on their residence in one of the two study areas and were contacted either directly and interviewed on the spot, or telephoned
to request an interview. The voluntary nature of these interviews was another constraining parameter; the interview could not be so long as to bias the results toward the responses of residents who were already interested in the topic. Interviews were between a half hour and an hour in length, with an additional half hour to hour of property analysis. Neither could the interviews be so penetrating as to discomfit the participants and so incite them to end the session. Therefore, the interviews were not only brief, but polite and based largely upon the information that the participant was willing to talk about when asked. All efforts were made to conduct the interview with a resident of the property who was actively engaged in the shaping and maintenance of the property, however, in a few cases where landscapers were retained or where the property had been extensively shaped by a previous resident, the focus of the interview tended to shift to the current resident’s experience of the property and their desires of it, rather than their explanation or narrative of what had already been done. These participants tended to be very willing to discuss their interpretation of the motivations of their predecessors in making the present landscapes, and in the two cases in which I interviewed members of the younger generation on a property, the participants had remarkable insight into the reasons why their parents had done particular things, and offered a level of explanation that my experience with the rest of the interviews would suggest would have been unlikely to have come forth from the parents themselves.

The timing of the interviews was delicate, both at a seasonal and daily level. Although the ample properties of the study areas provide many opportunities for outdoor activities and time spent outdoors relaxing, the season when a resident will willingly step outside without extensive preparation does not begin until mid May, and the time in which an exurbanite is at home excludes not only the work day and commute, but also many weekends. Furthermore, the extensive residential spacing of these properties necessitates
automobile transport for children's activities, further limiting potential interviewing time. With the total time of the interview, survey and property analysis falling at an average of one and one half to two hours, it was difficult to conduct more than four interviews in one day. These constraints helped to limit the sample size to around thirty five residents. When the data from these thirty five interviews, surveys, and property analyses had been assembled, quite a bit of repetition was found, and clear patterns had emerged at half that number of properties that were confirmed but not significantly altered by the additional data, showing that a certain amount of saturation as far as new information had been reached (Taylor & Bogdan 1984).

A weakness in my sample of exurbanites in both the King and Caledon study areas is the lack of representation of residents of large, electronically gated properties (what Punter called "invisible properties" (1974, Appendix VI). These residents proved difficult to reach. Not only were they beyond casual dropping in (the gates were locked), but the phone numbers listed for their addresses reached only messages, and my messages were not returned. Comments from other residents suggested that many of these properties are not full time residences, but weekend or second homes, or investments (71). Although the properties with large, elaborate fences command attention, their omission from my sample does not dramatically skew my results; there are only a few of these showy properties in each study area. Although a study of such unusual places cannot claim to be representative, I was concerned to represent the experience of a variety of people, not just the kind of people who would be interested in a landscape study. It was to address this concern that I conducted several of the interviews with no advance arrangement, in the hope that a person caught working in his or her yard might be more willing to answer a few questions about it than one given the opportunity to refuse over the telephone. Although it was difficult to find exurban
residents at home, I found them to be very willing to answer my questions when asked. Only one resident in the group that was cold contacted refused an interview, and his refusal was in large part due to language barriers. Having ascertained that willingness to participate in my study was not likely to indicate bias toward a certain set of attitudes and beliefs or narratives about landscape, I was more comfortable scheduling interviews in advance. This made trips to the study areas much more productive (and less exhausting).

The Study Areas

The study was conducted in two locations on the exurban fringe of Toronto: the Grange, in the Forks of the Credit area on the Niagara Escarpment in the Town of Caledon, and the wooded exurban developments north of King City on the Oak Ridges Moraine in the Township of King. Each study area consists of two adjacent sections: an estate subdivision and an area of individually developed properties.

Table 4.1 Study areas in Caledon and King: estate subdivision and individually developed properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Properties (N=34)</th>
<th>Caledon (N=19)</th>
<th>King (N=15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estate Subdivision (N=15)</td>
<td>7 (Caledon Mountain Estates)</td>
<td>8 (Kingscross Estates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individually Developed (N=19)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Forks of the Credit area of Caledon "was the area of finest landscape within the exurban areas of Toronto. ...so that within this 30 square-mile area there is a diversity of landscape unmatched elsewhere in the Toronto Region." With the many sources that agreed on this point, Punter justified his choice of the Caledon study area, which in 1971 was experiencing heavy exurban development which "would suggest that this area constitutes a key example in terms of the conflict between the amenities of the countryside and the visual intrusion of exurban development on the one hand, and public and private use of the landscape on the other" (1974: 83). For King, Punter asserted that it had "long been regarded as the address in the exurban areas of Toronto, and thus was an area of especial interest" (87).

Punter’s study period witnessed dramatic changes in the landscape as farmland was severed and subdivided to create the first estate subdivisions and what are now considered to be some of the classic exurban housing patterns. The period between 1971 and the present has not had the same sort of growth, largely due to the Planning Act of 1971 (which severely limited severances and subdivisions), although a slow rate of growth has held steady in both
areas (as intended by the Act). The somewhat established nature of these areas allowed me to interview people who had bought property to build their own homes and shaped the domestic space out of the previous agricultural matrix as well as those who had bought previously built homes and adapted to or changed the existing residential landscape. Punter chose an area which had experienced considerable growth during the time frame of his study. The initial establishment of exurban subdivisions provided an excellent illustration of the relationship with the idea of the desirable countryside that he described. Although this kind of development has continued (although rarely as thoughtfully as in the two subdivisions he describes), I chose to concentrate on areas which included those subdivisions started during Punter’s study and to examine the attitudes and land uses of a more established population rather than find a new population such as Punter’s in order to compare the differences in the initial attitudes and motivations of the move to the country. My sample showed a range of countryside tenures; many residents were long term¹ (quite a few had been in their present home between 20 and 40 years) but several were more recent (in a fairly steady distribution from 2-10 years) and one was still struggling to bring her office closer to home so she could commute rather than only come out on the weekends! The average residence length was between 18 and 19 years, and several residents had lived in their current houses since the time of Punter’s study!

The Caledon and King study areas have the common exurban features of varied topography, soil too poor for mixed or profitable farming, and the consequent regrowth forests. Both areas have a relatively long exurban history, and the relatively slow

¹ I use the term long term rather than old-timer. Old-timer connotes native residence in a place, and only one person in my study had grown up in the study area – and he would be considered a newcomer by most standard measures, having moved to Toronto for several years, then moved back to raise his children. I address some of the issues involved of old-timers vs. newcomers in Chapter 6.
development in recent years (held in check not only by the Planning Act, but also by residents’ support of municipal official plans) and popularity of the area for horse farming (the soil is suitable for pasturage and hay) have maintained the areas in an aesthetic if not altogether functional state of countryside. The areas also have important differences. King Township is bisected by a large highway (the 400) which runs directly into Toronto, making it an easier commute. King’s topography is also less dramatic than that of the Caledon study area, providing fewer truly spectacular house lots, but slightly more conducive to farming. The King study area is also very close to the village centre of King City, which provides services such as a post office, grocer, Masonic lodge, community centre, school and library. While the Caledon study area is between the hamlets of Inglewood and Belfountain, neither can provide the services of King City – this became apparent in anecdotes about local self-sufficiency. A limiting factor on the general applicability of findings from this study is the unusual nature of the study areas and their residents. Although the sample selected may be representative of the immediate surroundings, these properties have considerably more resources available for their shaping than an average in a more generally representative area. However, if we view privilege as a factor in removing common limitations of thrift, these properties can be seen as a realization of what more people might do if they had enough money.

Punter chose to work with fairly large case study areas rather than simple samples of exurban properties primarily because the residential countryside is characterized by “an intermixture of ownership and use only some of which are purely exurban in nature” (82), and he did not wish to present the aesthetic and ecology of a few exurban homes without the matrix in which they were situated. Punter’s study gives an excellent picture of the diversity and juxtaposition of land uses in the residential countryside; I have focused on smaller areas
within his larger case studies. Smaller areas were easier to manage on foot during the time interval of this project (this was especially relevant given the intensive methods of information gathering used both for the landscape and narrative data), and the areas chosen presented an excellent microcosm of the phenomena identified by Punter as vital to the exurban aesthetic.

In both King and Caledon study areas, a balance exists between residential properties in estate subdivisions (Kingscross Estates and Caledon Mountain Estates) and those that have been individually developed (usually by the current or a prior resident). Although these individually created properties are severances in Caledon (on the Grange Sideroad) and subdivisions in King (the King Summit Road), this difference is due to technical differences in municipal planning rules, and both types of individually developed properties share a recent history as farm that was going back to forest when divided for sale on the residential market. Both areas are near working farmland, although farms are struggling against increasing land prices and high levels of areal fragmentation as well as a market unfavorable to their trade, and both areas are near relatively large areas of woodland (Forks of the Credit in Caledon and Happy Valley, Mary Lake, and Seneca College in King). Both areas had large patches which were planted with trees during provincial efforts to stop blow sand during droughts earlier in the century, and both had islands of forest in a matrix of farmland that were developed into residential properties in the interval between 1954 and 1971. Finally, both areas are within commuting distance of downtown Toronto, although the potential for commuting has made the actual commute time increasingly prohibitive.

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2 Punter's Caledon study area covered 30 square miles, from Caledon Village in the North to Inglewood in the southeast and the western boundary of the Town of Caledon in the southwest; his King study area was even larger (with the other two areas, his total was 83 square miles). My study areas cover less than 3% of his areas, but were chosen using the same limiting criteria.
especially in Caledon, where major highways can be accessed only by a series of sideroads and minor highways. Although several of the retired people I interviewed reported that they had chosen the area because it was the nicest countryside within commuting distance of Toronto, many of the residents still in Toronto’s work force complained of the commute, and some even (often sheepishly) admitted that they took more days off and tried to telecommute as much as possible rather than braving the commute. Some residents had thought they could tolerate the commute, but had, in the end, abandoned Toronto for their residence, finding employment closer to home or, more commonly, relocating their office to a more reasonable commuting location. Although the traffic may be reducing the desirability of these exurban areas for those unable to exercise enough authority to relocate their job, the allure of the countryside is contributing to the increased dense subdivision development along the commute routes to Toronto. This highly visible and rapidly expanding land use was widely reviled by exurban residents and is clearly contributing not only to the traffic of the commute, but also to the psychological discomfort of commuting; seeing the hordes on one’s doorstep is an uncomfortable reminder of the uncertain fate of the residential countryside.

This pressure of development clearly contributes to one other commonality between the two study areas: both are the focus of intense grassroots efforts to slow development and preserve the “green” and interesting topography as an amenity belt around Toronto. Both areas have been the subject of remarkable efforts for preservation, with many levels of government and grassroots involvement (Sparling 2001), and the content of the arguments used to champion these green spaces supports the idea of their naturalness, their ecological necessity, their moral importance, and the degree to which the countryside holds a powerfully esteemed but not fully examined motivation for its residents and those who wish to be.
Participant Selection Process

Within study areas, participants were selected using two different strategies. The primary strategy was to canvas the selected area, interviewing all willing participants. This was the best available method for assuring a random sample. The secondary strategy was to participate in activities organized around interest in the landscape and land stewardship, and to solicit participants from these events. Because of their participation in these activities, these participants must be assumed to have a greater baseline of interest in the landscape. In the context of a pilot study, however, this helped to refine and validate the methodology by providing participants whose relationship with the landscape was a higher priority and whose narratives of their involvement with the landscape were consequently more explicit than that of the average resident. Finally, landowners who heard about my study sometimes contacted me to offer their land for analysis. These latter two sets of landowners were clearly biased toward a stewardship ethic in their land management, and interviews with them have not been included within the scope of this project. Their primary contribution to this study was in their role of survey participants, providing a larger sample within the geographic area for testing and statistical analysis of the questionnaire results. These voluntary participants’ understanding of their relationship with the land was also very helpful in figuring out what to ask in order to bring out land use narratives, especially as it became increasingly clear that most people did not really have a way to describe the way in which they related to their property.

As described above, both the King and Caledon study areas contained estate subdivisions as well as properties that were individually purchased and developed by the owners, and the number of properties from each of the two settlement types in each area has been balanced. Care was taken in the selection of the study areas to include residential areas
in which a series of contiguous neighbours could be interviewed and their properties surveyed, in order to provide a picture not only of the interaction between properties, but also of the processes of a larger number of properties and the behaviors of their inhabitants together. Thus, on the Grange Sideroad in Caledon and the King Summit Road in King, I have included most of the properties on the fourth concession, between the Mississauga Road and Creditview Road.

Figure 4.2 Study Areas: Contiguous properties.
The Instruments

I will first describe the general pattern of information collection, then return to each instrument to discuss its background, usefulness to the study, and details of use. All residents within the determined study area were directly contacted by visits to their residence at a time when they would be likely to be home (early evening and weekends), or by telephone. I explained that I was interested in change in the landscape of the area, and asked whether residents would be willing to show me around the property and tell me what they had done with it. If a resident was willing, we would proceed with a tour of the property (either at that moment, or at an arranged time). During this tour, I asked the resident questions about what s/he is doing or would like to do with the property while noting observations on a clipboard. At the end of the tour, the resident was asked to complete the questionnaire, which took five to ten minutes, during which time I would finish noting my observations about the property. If the resident was not willing to conduct the tour, I asked for permission to look at the property and asked the resident to complete the questionnaire, either at that time or at their convenience, in which case they could return it by mail. If permission to look at the property was not granted in areas of special interest (blocks in which all other properties were included in the study), as much observation as can be made from the road (and path from house) was made and further information was drawn from aerial photos.

The Interview

In the interview, I asked residents what they do with their property, and what they have changed, planted, and plan to do. I followed a semi-structured form (see Appendix B), although I allowed the residents to guide the interview toward their particular interests in the

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Telephone script and all other instruments are included in Appendix B
property in order to get a perspective on the property that was as much from their point of view as possible. I used a basic set of questions, most of which were open ended (e.g., “Can you tell me how you use your property and what you’ve done with it?”), and a few of which were explicit prompts, (e.g., “How much was the rural landscape a factor in deciding to move here?”), or follow-up questions designed to clarify the question, especially in the case of vague or non-specific responses (e.g., “What was the property like when you moved in here?” or, in tougher cases, “Do you have any old photographs of it?”). The questions asked about what residents do with their property, about the motives for moving to the countryside, about the experience of living in the countryside, about the experience of change, and about what residents did to change, or to conserve, their properties, and what they would cite as their influences for feeling and interacting as they do with the landscape.

Table 4.2 Interview Questions (and related prompts) by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category:</th>
<th>Interview Question (and related prompts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecology</td>
<td>Can you tell me how you use your property and what you’ve done with it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me what you have planted on the property, and why? What have you changed, and why? (What was the property like when you moved in here? Do you have any old photographs of it?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you plan to do with the property, and why? Do you have an image of what you want your property to be like in 20 years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you manage your woodlot? (if appropriate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community</td>
<td>No specific questions were asked about community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identity</td>
<td>How much was the rural landscape a factor in deciding to move here? (Do you consider this “rural”?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction and Change</td>
<td>Has your experience lived up to your expectations, and how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you satisfied with your property? (Can you tell me about what it is that you hope to get out of this landscape? What kind of feeling do you want to get from your property?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have you noticed an overall change in the natural environment since you moved here? (How do you feel about it?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you feel about changes occurring in this area? (If no change, will people have to do anything to keep it the way it is? If so, what?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ideology</td>
<td>Why did you choose to move here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any places that you've seen or experienced that are good examples of the way you'd like your property/this area to be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have these places (or others) influenced you in what you’ve done with your property? (Anything else? Art, stories, movies, TV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there other places that are important to you? (examples might be a vacation or camping spot, a cottage, a farm, a community garden, a particular forest) What do you do there? How do you feel there? How does that affect what you do with this property?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the most ideal places that you know of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questions were generated using the five categories of the sustainability factor model as a core framework for the research questions (described above):

I. What are the narratives that residents of the countryside use to describe what they do with their land?

II. What are the ways in which they are using their land?

III. What are the attitudes and motivations that seem to be implicated in their land uses?

Questions were revised during the first week of interviews (six interviews) based on successes and failures in drawing residents out in talking about their properties. In designing the interview, I drew on the results of test runs of the survey questionnaire, (described below), and on my past experience interviewing residents of small rural islands about their land uses (Cadieux 1999) and on pilot interviews conducted with residents of Southborough, Massachusetts during the summer of 2000. In interviewing residents about their relationship with the landscape, I have frequently encountered problems of either too much non-specific information or too little information. In order to address this, I prepared at least two related or follow-up questions for each question included in the interview, to try to draw out reticent participants, or focus rambling ones. Despite the fact that I would have preferred to question participants more directly about their attitudes and values in relation to land use, I directed the focus of the interview toward things done with the property in order to diffuse the
emotional content of the interview and to keep the content of my conversation with residents attached to the visible environment.

I recorded the resident's responses to my questions (and my comments and notes) in the form of detailed notes taken during the interviews. Although my notes lack the full record of conversation that might have been provided by audio recordings of the interviews, recording equipment would have been too awkward, not only socially, as the participants in my study were often somewhat suspicious of my desire to look at their private properties, but also technically, as most of the interviews were conducted while walking outside, in conditions unsuitable for portable recording devices. Furthermore, the problem of transcribing transcripts in a project of this scope would have been prohibitively unwieldy.

Punter made a good argument for his reliance on analysis of the landscape record for his study, "the landscape itself is a living record of what exurbanites desire most from living in the countryside, and is arguably a more reliable guide than an administered questionnaire or interview. Not only does it provide insights into their life style, but into their aspirations and motivations as well" (36), but he was also aware of the limitations of his methods: "Obviously physical features alone provide only limited insight into the motivations and life styles of the property owner, and ideally should be matched with comprehensive interviewing/questionnaire analysis" (438, and pers. comm., 15 June 2001). Although I was building on the basic methods that Punter had created, I wanted to be able to move beyond my experience and interpretation of the residential countryside and to be able to explicitly understand the ways in which its residents would express their relationship with it. The interviews were more difficult than I had anticipated, however, largely due to the implicit nature of narratives of interaction with the landscape, as I have mentioned above, and I was
grateful for Punter's detailed descriptions of his landscape analysis, which I used as described below.

Landscape Observation

A great part of the information collected during this study came from the landscape observation. In part, this was due to the mixed methodology of the rest of the project, and my desire to have information of the landscape that could be interpreted in as many ways as possible as the analysis of the other information progressed, and which could be referred to as an index of each property. Qualitative and quantitative data might be easily separated at a semantic level (questionnaire and interview results rarely resemble each other), but visual information has both aspects of quantity and quality, and I found it useful to approach each property with a holistic method. Armed with a revised version of Punter's "Variables and Classifications Utilised in the Analysis of Landscape Treatment" (1974; see Appendix B), I noted such quantifiable aspects of each property as lot size, setback, topographic relationship, road type, presence of patio, barbeque, vegetable garden, swimming pool, tennis court, horse equipment, and presence and type of abutments. The property landscape treatment form also included simplified categories for more complex phenomena such as view (Road, Limited panorama, Long distance, Enclosed front, Enclosed back), trees (None, Saplings, Mature Deciduous, Poplars, Dwarf-evergreen, Blue Spruce, Hedges, Evergreen lines, Windbreaks, Screens, Plantation, Original Wood, Original wood at rear, Lilacs, Willows, Orchard, Bush, Scrub, Complex total, Evergreen [complete], Shrubs), and ornamentation (None, Wagonwheels, Statuettes, Negro-Boys, Jockeys, Flags, Colonial, Classical Statuettes, Lamp-posts, Antiques, Rustic Bridges, Gates, Misc, Junk, limestone). Although I was at first
skeptical of the applicability of Punter’s categories, I was continually surprised (often to my amusement) at how appropriate many of his designations still are. This kind of data would allow me to understand patterns that might occur in the relationship between my interviews and surveys (below) and what was being done on the property in a general sense, but I also wanted a more organic sense of what was happening on each property. As Punter described it:

“In conjunction with the field survey of vegetation every residential unit in each of the case study areas was surveyed using a variety of criteria. Particular attention was focussed on the name of the property, perhaps in itself the most revealing feature (e.g., “Redwood Manor”, “Ah Wilderness”, “Scotch on the Rocks”, “Wyndsong”), … and on the nature of the lot and the landscaping thereof (noting the species of vegetation as well as the nature of ornamentation).” (Punter 1974:70)

In addition to the form described above, I used two additional qualitative methods. As Punter suggests above, I noted the nature of the lot and landscaping; in this passage he is referring to his form of landscape variables, however, I made additional notes describing each property, both the overall effect and treatment as well as interesting, unusual, or notable characteristics. In addition to this semantic note, I made a sketched plan of each property, noting the relative location, size and relationship of trees, buildings, vegetation and other patterns in the landscape.

I compiled this sketch while I spoke with the resident of the property, and I flipped between the sketch and the interview notes while we walked around the property. Using this method, I could note residents’ descriptions or comments about individual aspects of my property sketches and make connections between these two information sources. The links between these two sources of information allowed me to ask more abstract questions about

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*I also wanted to collect fairly detailed ecological information in order to be able to make analyses about the impact of exurban settlement that fall outside the scope of this paper*
how the landscape reflected the story being told by the participant while I was on the property. The notes associated with these questions were invaluable in analyzing the patterns I will describe below.

Finally, I was able to match my drawings to aerial photographs and land use maps with enough detail to correct the scale of each of my drawings and to make a more accurate mosaic of the areas in which I surveyed blocks of properties. Using the aerial photographs and my ground observations in tandem allowed me to make more detailed and accurate observations about what is going on in the landscape.

Survey

My last instruments are two survey questionnaires, the first about attitudes and beliefs relating to land use and the local landscape and the second a measure of personality traits (John & Srivastava 1999; Paulhus 1991). The questionnaires were administered at the end of the interview (they were often left with the residents to complete at a convenient time and mail in), and were composed of a number of statements with which the participant was able to agree or disagree by circling the response that best corresponded to his or her response (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

The first survey, Landscape Usership Survey, Part 1: Landscape Attitudes and Beliefs (see Appendix B), was designed as a measure of engagement with the local landscape, covering topics such as rural residence, participation in local community, and change in the landscape. I developed a set of items by analyzing several sources of questions about the landscape (Alexander 1979; Jackson 1984; Lewis 1979; Clay 1980; Meinig 1979; Relph 1976) and organizing them into categories of ecology, community (involvement, local
control), identity, satisfaction, and ideology. Each category was further divided into topics as follows (numbers in parentheses indicate how many statements fell into each category):

Table 4.3 Survey questions by category and subcategory

1. **Ecology 10**
   - A  Environmental awareness/effort: (6)
   - B  Interest in/Stewardship of Natural Environment: (4)

2. **Community 13**
   - C  Community involvement: (5)
   - D  Local control: (4)
   - E  Local Economy: (4)

3. **Identity 12**
   - F  Identity/Ruralness: (10)
   - G  Farms: (2)

4. **Satisfaction and Change 9**
   - H  General Satisfaction: (4)
   - I  Change: (5)

5. **Ideology and Influence 8**
   - J  Escapism: (4)
   - K  Influences: (4)

The questionnaire offers a broad selection of statements about expectations and ideas about the countryside and about participation in local cultural processes. The statements are based largely on interviews with people who have moved to the countryside with the explicit intention to participate in a rural lifestyle (Cadieux 1999) and on review of the rural literature. Some of the items have been used in similar surveys, such as Buttel and Flinn’s survey of agrarian sentiment (1975), Bunting and Filion’s focus groups on dispersed settlement form (1999), and Beesley and Walker’s surveys of residential paths and residential satisfaction (1990a, 1990b). The statements explore a few of the most popularly cited aspects of the type of narrative about the countryside I am attempting to document, such as the need for protection of farms (G5) and their ideal nature as a place to bring up children (G30); the importance of a sense of tradition (F17), especially rural tradition (F44); and the benefits of engagement in the local community (C22, C25, C33, C43, C68) and landscape (B38, B50, B51). One of the aims of the questionnaire was to break rural ideology into facets or individual components that might offer more explanation for courses of action than the more generally conceived rural ideal (Corraliza & Berenguer 2000; Walsh & Sechrest 2001).
The questionnaire was subjected to two test runs before being used in the context of this study. Both tests were run with participants who were slightly biased toward stewardship issues (attendees of a workshop on property stewardship sponsored by Caledon GreenCASE [N=10] (Baker 2001), and a lecture by Lorraine Johnston on Ontario Naturalized Gardens (2001) sponsored by the Caledon Countryside Alliance [N=26]); consequently, this bias was noted in refining the questionnaire. Questions with no variation in response were discarded, and the wording of some questions was changed to make them clearer in response to participant comments or response patterns that indicated that the questions were not being understood (blanks, question marks, or grossly inconsistent answers).

In composing this survey, I was interested in whether residents would identify strongly with suggested aspects of a narrative of the countryside, or whether their particular role in the place where they live would be stronger than the narrative force of the rural idyll - would they subordinate their own experience to a more generally available cultural narrative pattern? I was also interested in the priorities of interest that could emerge from such a survey. Does a particular resident value the participation in a community more strongly than the rural identity of the place of residence? Due to the high emotional and narrative content of these factors, a questionnaire provides a rapid path to an overview of these issues without the lengthy interviews that would be required to cover so many topics. In addition, the generic format of the questionnaire diffuses some of the emotional response that could become uncomfortable and unproductive in an interview and may potentially reduce the amount of socially desirable responding – it is much easier to disagree with a statement about the importance of environmental sustainability than it is to defend such a position to an inquiring interviewer who may demand justifications or explanation.
Self-Deceptive Enhancement

The first five categories in the land use questionnaire are clearly important to the understanding of residential land use attitudes: ecology, community, identity, satisfaction, and ideology. The last, a personality measure of self-deception, was included with the others to measure the degree to which a participant is rigidly overconfident in his or her own worldview. The items that test for this trait generally test for an over confidence in one’s own judgments: “I always know why I like things”; “My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right”; “I am very confident of my judgments” (Paulhus 1991). Certain problematic patterns in land use relating to exurban settlement relate to self-deception. Although I will return to this in the discussion, early factor and cluster analysis of the responses to these statements indicated that a significant correlation existed between self-deceptive enhancement, positive identification with rural ideology items, and newness to the countryside (residents of less than 5 years) (Cadieux 2001). This confirms problematic patterns described by Jobes (2000) in which incomers with high expectations would move to a rural location, try to shape the landscape to meet their expectations, and frequently depart in disappointment because the reality would not conform to their expectation and they could not see this as a function of a faulty expectation.
Analysis

Qualitative Interpretation: the Interviews

As described above, an interview was conducted with a resident of each property. The content of each interviews was transcribed as soon as possible after the interview from verbatim notes taken while conducting the interview. The notes were taken and transcribed on paper forms with fields for each of the questions and printed with the prompts used during the interview (Appendix B, form 2). Content relevant to each question was recorded in the appropriate field; additional information and conversation was recorded in an extra field.

When all of the interviews were completed, the content was analyzed for themes of content and narrative structure. Content was first analyzed by field; all responses to each question were considered together and notes were made about notable repetitions or relationships with other responses or landscape features (Lofland and Lofland 1984). The themes that emerged from this analysis allowed for a more directed review of the transcripts of the interviews together with the landscape information, leading to a hierarchy of themes and subthemes, as suggested by Taylor and Bogdan (1984). These patterns will be discussed in Chapter 5.

This arrangement of interview content into groups and hierarchies was guided by the framework upon which the questions were based (Table 4.3). The relationship between each theoretical factor and its group of associated interview questions is shown in Table 4.2, above, and the analytical questions used to interpret the interview content is shown here in Table 4.4.
Table 4.4 Questions used for analysis and interpretation of interview content by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions used to guide analysis and interpretation of interview content:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecology</td>
<td>Do the things that residents do with their yards consider and respect the environment and ecology? (long term sustainability, integrity of ecological processes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the residents engage in enjoyment of and/or stewardship of the natural environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community</td>
<td>Do the residents participate in their local community? Is this related to the way in which they use their land?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the residents contribute to the viability of their locality as an entity, in governance, economy, and stewardship of their land?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identity</td>
<td>How important is an ideology of ruralness, or participation in a rural narrative to residents, and what does this influence them to do with their property? [area for major disjuncture – everyone wants the countryside; very few offer good explanations of how they engage in producing countryside]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the relationship between consumption of the amenity of agriculture and any sort of support for agriculture? [difficulty here because of unsuitability of study areas for farming]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction and Change</td>
<td>How has the experience of residence in the countryside lived up to expectations and how does the resident describe the experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has the experience changed the resident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do residents feel about change and what does this influence them to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ideology and Influence</td>
<td>Is there a relationship (or a disjuncture) between idealized conceptions and pragmatic processes required to sustain those ideals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What sort of influences have been active in creating an ideology of rural residence (and what have they influenced residents to do)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[People who are newcomers understand the ideals of the countryside, or at least find them desirable, without necessarily understanding the processed required to sustain those ideals, or wanting them.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Personality</td>
<td>How do personality factors relate to the ways in which residents use land?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are particular patterns evident either in certain land use-personality relationships, or in the group of exurbanites as a whole?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Landscape Interpretation**

A similar method for interpretation was used with the landscape information. The schematic maps of each property that I had made while on site were examined for patterns. Notes were made about patterns, especially those that were repeated or that related to information from the interviews or surveys. A set of questions, similar to those used to guide
the initial approach to the landscape and the analysis of the interview content, was used to

guide the interpretation of the landscape content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category:</th>
<th>Questions used to guide landscape interpretation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ecology</td>
<td>What are residents doing with their properties? (especially regarding vegetation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the layout and what are the major patterns in this property?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do future plans relate to the existing landscape?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community</td>
<td>How do the landscape patterns in this property interact with those in adjacent properties and the larger matrix in which the property is situated? (Does this have to do with community processes?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identity</td>
<td>Is a rural aesthetic involved in the landscape treatment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction and Change</td>
<td>How does narrative experience influence the landscape treatment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is the landscape changing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ideology and Influence</td>
<td>Does land use reflect casual or committed rural ideology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are influences obvious in land use? What patterns have influenced generated?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Interpretation: the Survey and Property Landscape Treatment

Quantitative data for this study came from two sources. First, the Landscape

Usership Survey: Landscape Attitudes and Beliefs and second, the Property Landscape

Treatment Form. The Landscape Attitudes and Beliefs form used Likert scales for responses

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The Landscape Treatment

form was split between items which could be scored on a continuum (setback, property size,

enclosure) and those which could only be given a binary designation – present or absent

(vegetable garden, swimming pool, horses, tire swings). Analyses of these data are presented

in Chapter 5, Results.
Chapter 5: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the interviews, landscape analysis, and survey questionnaire. (The results have been organized according to the processes described in Chapter 4.) Examples and illustrations are marked by their property number for reference.

The Interview

Due to the structured nature of the interview, interview content is relatively homogeneous. The general themes revolve around land use and vegetation, and in many cases are biased in an ecological direction, largely because residents assumed from my introduction that my interests were ecological. Although this resulted in a larger than expected set of stories about nature, it allowed subjects to warm to the subject of their property and reduced political tension about such issues as change and development. Along with the stories about what they had done and planned to do with their properties, and why, residents spoke mostly about life in the countryside, and about change and development, mostly in terms of the spread of megalopolitan Toronto. Along with these stories about their home places, residents also shared stories about aspects of their surrounding culture that were important to their experience of the place, or to its character, identity or future.

The four major themes of the interview content are presented below, along with the themes of which they are comprised and the subcategories that describe each bundle of similar stories. Following the table, I lay out each of the four major themes and describe the subthemes and their categories in more detail, and with examples. Although only a sample of responses are given for each theme, a remarkable amount of similarity existed between interviews on most themes – even the same words and phrases were often repeated by different residents. Thirty-three interviews were used for this study. In the description of the
content of these interviews, I use the following terms to denote the approximate frequency of a given response: almost always (25-33), most or over half (16-24), many or frequent (12-18), common or often (8-14), some or several (4-10), a few (3-5). The terms are approximate in part because the content was recorded as notes during the interviews and not from complete transcripts.

Table 5.1. Interview Content: Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Descriptions of property treatment or use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivations for property use (discovery of amount of work required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future plans for properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>The Move to the Country (why, and the desire for)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life in the Country (the way people feel about it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anecdotes or other statements about natural environment &amp; processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Change Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories about Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ways to approach change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptions of Property Treatment or Use and Motivations for Property Use

There seemed to be a threshold below which activities executed or things planted did not get mentioned. Interviews frequently started out slowly: "We've done a little bit of planting" (44), and slowly warmed to specifics. Only a few residents talked about mowing their lawn, although all but one had a lawn. Some residents briefly mentioned that they also planted annual flowers, but this tended to be mentioned dismissively. Several residents did ask whether I was interested in identifying the smaller flora (with some trepidation over how long that would take), but very few spontaneously mentioned the smaller vegetation, excepting a few gardeners who detailed their plantings. It is certainly possible that this is a product of a perceived bias toward larger vegetation. However, it is interesting to note that aside from a few building, fencing, or earthmoving projects, the vast majority of mentioned property activities involve the planting and cutting of trees.
The most commonly reported activities on properties were tree plantings (over half of the properties), followed by tree cuttings (almost half). Reasons given for planting trees tended to describe some reason for liking trees, or their effects:

“I like having the trees around the house because they keep the house cool.” (52)
“It was so bare. The trees add more privacy.” (41)
“We planted 4 or 5 trees – things that attract the birds.” (71)
“I’ve been planting evergreens to have some green in the winter.” (72)

A few residents described their actions more in terms of affection for some aspect of the process, rather than the result:

“If you look [out in the woods] on the west side, every Christmas tree we’ve had for the past 15 years we’ve planted. We had live ones and planted them out.” (53)

On the other hand, among the many residents who had taken trees down, only one explained her actions in terms of disliking trees:

“We just cut out wild hazelnut, which I didn’t like.” (68)

However, the dismissal of poplar as a tree worthy of their forest (something that Punter seems likely to have encountered as well, as he included an entirely separate category for poplar) was surprisingly common:

“Poplars, really a weed. They dry out and become a danger.” (69)
“I’m getting rid of the dangerous poplars out front.” (60)
“Poplars – dirty, dirty trees” (75)
“I’ve slowly whacked out the poplars.” (67)
Figure 5.1. Poplars and Spruces: Culturally driven succession from “dirty” to desirable trees (note lawn mowed under trees) (75).

Cutting trees tended to be explained as a necessity, either to prevent unwanted situations or to tidy things up:

“Wild cherry’s terrible for tent caterpillar – I’ve been cutting them down.” (72)

“I think it would cut down on the mosquito population if I cut back the trees a bit.” (77)

“We’ve cleaned it up, removed a few trees.” (44)

“There were elm trees like crazy [which are dying from Dutch Elm disease]. Cut 50 trees down, 20 more to come down... It was a real dump.” (55)

“Put on this addition, cut half of the silver maple and a birch down for it. Took out the sumac so I could get the lawn mower in there. Took out some half dead fruit trees.” (60)

In terms of thinning, a continuum existed between residents who thinned their trees as part of their forest management and those for whom cutting trees was only done when really necessary:

“We like the trees coming along, but we’re constantly cutting because they threaten to choke each other out.” (59)
“There was an apple orchard at the front, but the trees were all dying so he cut them out. Lilacs have taken over where the apple trees were.” (58)

“I want it to all grow back. I just hack back the trees when they get too close to the house. ... I bring in firewood, I burned dead stuff or poplars..., but the poplars in the bush would be dead anyways. I’ve had to thin up here, cut 100-200 trees. No specific plan, just cut if there’s one that’s a problem.” (67)

“We only cut down the things that died.” (53)

Figure 5.2. Unthinned Sugar maples, front property and drive (51).

As I began the interview with questions about what the resident had done with the property, and often had to prompt with questions about the way it had looked when they moved in, a common theme was a list of changes that the current resident had made from the way that the previous residents had done things. These were often minor changes, but they provided insight into which parts of the property had been considered desirable and undesirable, and they often revealed the aesthetic bias of the resident:
either by the current or previous residents). Finally, a common although somewhat neglected category described ongoing uses of the property. The everyday details of the property may have seemed too inconsequential to report; as mentioned above, only items of a certain importance tended to pass muster for the interview. A few families tapped their sugar maples (mostly “for the children”); one property was called “Maple Corner.” These residents were quite happy with their maples – they clearly added value and enjoyment to the property and the residents were quite unhappy that a new neighbour had moved in next door and was cutting down the other side of the bush. Many residents had vegetable and flower gardens, although only a few mentioned them. Almost all residents mowed the lawn, but again, only one or two discussed the staggering amount of time it took them to maintain the lawn:

“I mowed the lawn for the first two years, but I got sick of spending the time I could have spent with my kids.” (48)

The amount of work required to maintain a country property was more common as a general theme than as a description of the specific actions required. Although some residents clearly enjoyed the activities—“It releases my — my mind is at ease when I’m pulling weeds” (68)—or at least didn’t mind them—“Gus likes to be active and trimming is not work that’s distasteful” (59)—many complained or admitted that it was much more work than they had imagined in their image of country life:

“I’m sort of a country guy…but it’s been a lot more work than I thought it would be.” (60)

“I have to try so hard just to keep it up and I’m not an experienced gardener – that’s why I need this woman who comes in and tells me this is a weed and to get rid of it or to keep the milkweed and goldenrod because the butterflies like them and they’re good for the system.” (52)

“It’s my one issue with nature. You just can’t keep on top of it.” (58)

“It’s been a lot of work, but … worth it” (47)
Table 5.2. Interview Results: Property Uses and Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Bundles of Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Descriptions of property treatment or use</td>
<td>Planted trees/ Allowed tree growth/ Took trees down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Change/No change from previous owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pond, Planted too many trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More work than expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for property use</td>
<td>Liked trees for some reason</td>
<td>Neatening, thinning, removing dead trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Desired effect – known goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future plans for properties</td>
<td>None, or just low maintenance</td>
<td>Specific plans (things to do list)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Long term plans, low current engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No specific plans, but desire for plans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future Plans for Properties

Very few residents talked about future plans for their properties. Fully half of the residents had reached a stable state in their property arrangement and just wanted to maintain it as it was (17 out of 34). This may reflect the long length of residence of my sample (mean = 18.4 years, standard deviation = 11.2); residents had had plenty of time to make their properties into what they wanted. Seven households were planning to move, either immediately or in the longer term (three properties were for sale, but were waiting for the appropriate buyer – all mentioned that in this area and price range this could be a wait of several years). Most of the future plans residents discussed were expressed in the form of a things-to-do list, usually triggered by our tour around the property:

“I should clear a lot out. More thinning, clear it up, make it look pretty.” (57)

“I’d like to do something with the driveway. The retaining wall’s falling down. Move the lilac trees.” (67)

A few residents, mostly those who had already engaged in serious property shaping, had long-term plans they clearly relished, although they also seemed to have realistic estimates of
the amount of time and effort required to achieve their plans (and consequently a good sense of humor about the possibility that the projects might not get done at all):

“I’d like to put in a rose garden, but I’m too busy for that right now.” (52)

“Jennifer’d like a horse. [When I asked this question, Jennifer, the ten year old daughter, got all excited and her father said “I wish you weren’t here for this question.” (Jennifer, in response to “a horse,” pipes in, “or two”)], but it probably isn’t going to happen. We’ll say a building at the back, a shed at the back, possibly for a horse.” (55)

“Sometimes we’re too busy. The tree falls in the forest and you leave it there.” (77)

One pair of residents was very excited about the potential of future plans. They had moved to King (from Toronto) to satisfy the husband’s desire to move to the country and had only begun to work with the property. Both the husband and wife expressed enthusiasm about various potential plans: a fountain, a vegetable garden, some changes in the lawn. Despite their enthusiasm and the many plans they mentioned, both also expressed trepidation and the desire for a more expert opinion than theirs:

“We’d like to do things, but we aren’t educated about it – it isn’t our specialty – we’d like to experiment with a few things, but we’d like to get somebody to help us. It’s expensive to mess up.” (44)

Some version of this desire to do something more was common, and was frequently accompanied by a confession of uncertainty about the propriety of the resident’s desires in the countryside. Even when a preference was clearly expressed, it might be accompanied by a self-conscious qualifier about what might be considered proper, especially in the cases of recently moved urbanites:

“We’d like to put in a garden, but it’s hard to get an area with full sun, and the areas that have full sun are right out in front where everybody can see. We don’t want to take away from the house.” (44)

“We’re wondering whether to put down pesticide – as you can see, there aren’t any dandelions tolerated here [said with a sigh and a nod to the other yards]. We know it’s bad, but we’re in between this neighbourhood and the highway and they allow the
dandelions to grow by the highway, and, as you can see, there’s a bit of the keeping-up-with the Joneses here.” (42)

“You don’t really go into people’s gardens, see what kind of things they do, and I’m not from around here…” (52)

This concern about what neighbours might think appropriate was not unfounded, as this strongly disapproving anecdote demonstrates:

“If you want to create privacy out here, you plant trees. I offered to split the cost of the trees with him, but he brought a totally Toronto suburban solution out here and put up a fence!” (48)

Description of future plans was often accompanied by stories about moving to the countryside, and residents discussed their desire to do more with their properties in the context of how living in the countryside had lived up to their expectations. One family had moved to Caledon to be able to have horses. Although they did not currently have a horse (they had owned one and sold it), they described how they were leaving areas for paddocks even though they were planting the rest with trees. Whenever the husband became very excited about his tree planting, the wife would remind him that she thinks they should not plant over all the pasture so that when she gets horses again, they’ll have a place for them (54). Two neighbouring families, although they did not have horses, had considered open spaces in a similar way, leaving themselves the possibility for fulfilling all elements of their imagined “country estate.”

“We planted the trees on the hills, the areas that were hard to get to, or had some trees already, and left the flat accessible areas open. We want a pool, and if we needed paddocks…” (55)

“It would be more of a natural woodland – we have no plans for a pool or tennis court, but where the flower and vegetable garden is would be a great spot for a pool or tennis court – and we might put in a hot tub off the deck, I don’t know.” (52)
Countryside

Table 5.3. Interview Results: The Countryside

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The Move to the Country

Discussion of long term plans was frequently tied to explanations of why the resident had moved to the property. These stories about the obvious appeal of country living were almost always present and often brightened the tone of the interview, as it was a topic to which residents warmed happily. Two notable features of these stories were the repetition of certain themes, such as being a country person at heart, and a common lack of explanatory details about why the country had been so appealing:

"We always liked the country" (47)

"We always wanted to live in the country, but we waited till the kids were driving." (45)

"I’m sort of a country boy at heart." (75)

"I grew up in Toronto, I went to Guelph, so... I just liked the country, liked the isolation." (67)

Often, stories had an explanation for why the residents had left their previous home place (more on this below), or picked their specific property, but even so, these descriptions of the desire to live in the country continued to be fairly general:
"Moved up from Toronto. Moved my business to Brampton. I always wanted to live in the country. Good thing to do. Brampton was still an agricultural centre. Gorgeous country, Chincousay." (53)

"I’m sort of a country guy. I was brought up on a farm. We were living in Brampton and it was a little too claustrophobic." (60)

"I used to live in Toronto, Mississauga actually, and I wanted to come out to the country. The city was too crowded and too polluted. My job moved out here and I came out and bought this property. And now I’m retired and it’s good to live here."

"We kind of liked the country area and it was convenient to my husband’s work." (74)

Some residents described specific aspects of the country that had appealed to them, but even these more explicit explanations often drew on a general assumption of countryside desirability. Residents, while offering these explanations, would often start explaining how they had felt about the countryside, pause to think about it, and resume by falling back on a more general explanation.

"We bought here because of the environment, geologically. This area has more of everything we love and which should be preserved." (51)

"My mom and dad had retired out here ...and it was a nice place to live." (57)

"Gus grew up on a mixed farm. We wanted to gain something in a move - we spent several years looking - privacy, a house the way you want it, aesthetics." (59)

There were a few residents who had considered both the aspects of their property and of the local community, and who knew that both suited their way of life:

"We are from a small village back in Slovenia, and my husband always liked to live in the country. We built our own house. The place felt like home, before we even moved." (68)

Even though residents’ descriptions of their own motivations for moving to the country, and of what they had done to realize the related expectations were often somewhat superficial, some were able to describe in detail the reasons that others would move out from the city to live in the country as they had:
"They're landing here for certain reasons. Small, friendly, safe, variety of housing, green, clean. They like wildlife, they want to be safe from toxins. And a lot of that you can't get in the city." (57)

This was a particularly interesting case because this was a man who was very involved in the issue of exurban migration at a municipal level, and had clearly given the issue much deliberation, but who still explained his own migration with a shrug, and the comment, "it was a nice place to live" (57).

Only a very few residents mentioned the rural agricultural aspect of the countryside. These were residents whose move to the countryside had been motivated by farming, but tellingly (for the plight of agriculture), of the three, one had moved for horse farming, one to be conceptually in a farming landscape, and one to get away from farming!

"Horses. No point in staying without horses." (58) [This resident is moving because she no longer has horses.]

"The rural farming aspect was an important part of the appeal. I wanted to move to a farm, but I met extreme opposition [nodding to his wife, in the kitchen beyond the door]; this was as close as I could get." (49)

"We realized that Jim had allergies, we move here for the high altitude and to get away from farming. We wanted some space. We saw the potential – lots of room, and the area attracted us." (55)

Two predictable and common reasons for moving to the country were children and the community, and often the combination of both:

"It's been a lot of work, but [worth it ] – we had young children and wanted to bring them up here." (47)

"Wanted to move into an environment more conducive to raising kids. There's a tight knit community – there's an opportunity to get involved if the community isn't overpopulated." (48)

"I refused to raise my children in the city. I was raised in the country at Bathurst and Lawrence when that was all farmland. ... In a small community there is a sense of community and there wasn't in the city – there still is here." (49)
Even those who did not experience the benefits of raising children or being part of the community mentioned that this was supposed to be a part of the experience:

“I miss the friendship of close neighbours. For the people whose kids were growing up here, it’s probably a tighter community.” (45)

This woman, who missed the friendship of neighbours, also described what turned out to be a common phenomenon in which one spouse wants to move to the country, and the other is not so enthusiastic but agrees to go along. Jobes (2000) describes this as one of the most problematic aspects of the allure of the country, especially in cases which result in disillusionment and, frequently, divorce. I did not ask for such personal details, but in most cases where a resident described how the desire for country residence had not been equally shared, the less enthusiastic partner had come to terms with the countryside, or even come to share affection for its charms (of course, this does not account for those cases which did not have a happy ending, although the one resident interviewed who mentioned her divorce now lived next door to her ex-husband).

“My boyfriend wanted to live in the country (I wanted to live in the city), but I made him quit his job to come here from Montréal, so he sort of won that one.” (52)

“My husband wanted to move to the country. More property... It was mostly Eric’s [husband] idea to move out here. I grew up in the country and I felt isolated as a kid, so I was reluctant to move out as an adult, but I can drive now, and I’m finding that it’s great.” (44)

“We’ve been here for four years now and love it. It might be more practical to live in the city, but I love it here, it would be very hard to go the reverse route now... The mover saw my face when we were moving and he said ‘I move a lot of people and the women often have tears in their eyes, but none of them ever want to move back.’” (45)

She did mention, however, “Some people – it just isn’t for them. It’s too isolated and they have to go back” (45).

One or two residents did mention problems with the isolation: “It’s a problem, the isolation. It’s expensive that you need to have a couple of cars. You need something to blow
the snow, a tractor” (67). But most considered the privacy an important quality that they had been seeking in the countryside, especially with Toronto as an available contrast:

“I’d rather look out on this than someone’s backyard. Since we were both teachers, everyone knows us and everything you do, the neighbor is looking out the window, everyone feels they can talk to you anytime, and that’s fine, but... I certainly enjoy working on the property here than working on a rosebush in town. Neighbours!” (59)

“We wanted a place that was very private, not likely to turn into a subdivision.” (52)

“It’s really wonderful because I can’t see the five sideroad – you know?” (53)

“Privacy up here’s excellent.” (65)

Space was desired along with privacy:

“My husband wanted more property. Friends of ours moved out to Maple, but they only have 3 feet! It’s hard to live right on top of somebody – it’s nice to spread out.” (44)

“We were living in Brampton and it was a little too claustrophobic.” (60)

“The city was too crowded and too polluted.” (63)

“There are more and more people. I wonder that people don’t have any room, no green around...” (68)

Only a few residents considered the extra space to be problematic, as well as enjoyable.

“I would like it clustered more. I suppose one could call this urban sprawl; they just put the houses out in the middle of everywhere. ... I can’t see us here forever – we’re not aging into this property. We like Guelph and Ferguson – a smaller space.” (42)

The woman who related the story about the mover, above, and who realized that too much isolation could be troublesome also considered the problematic aspects of too much space:

“We lived in Streetsville, which is becoming very populated, full of traffic... [but] this is too big for us – just keeping up with the landscaping – so when our kids move out, we’ll have to move out of here, but...” (45)

Stories about crowding, lack of privacy and the other evils that made the city a place from which to escape were often triggered by my question, “How much was the rural landscape a factor in deciding to move here?” The stories about how the rural landscape was a factor will be described below (see Cultural themes). But for many people, specific
positive aspects of the countryside had not been as important a motivator in the decision to move as the negative aspects of the city from which they were moving had been. A resident of Caledon, who had been involved in administering a survey asking residents about why they were moving there, related that the urban in-migrants seemed like “refugees.” In contrast to wanting what they were coming to, he had found that, “They really don’t want what was there [in Toronto]” (57). However, as vehemently as residents condemned the city as a place to live, most also praised their current location for its easy access to the benefits of the city:

Husband: “We don’t want to be city-oriented [his wife interrupts incredulously, “City-oriented? We’re just not city people.”] You can be out here on certain days and there’s no noise.” Wife: “We’re close to everything too, if you have to go to the city, the airport.” (55)

“We just wanted to live out in the country. …. No, we owned our own business, and we worked out of [Toronto]. It was a matter of finding a place in the country close to where we worked.” (71)

“Our business is in Aurora, we’re only 45 minutes from the city, but we can enjoy clean air, clean water.” (47)

“I really like to be close to the city – close to a town, where there are restaurants, etc. I go downtown once every two weeks – I was supposed to go today, but I just couldn’t bring myself to do it and I made a conference call instead.” (45)

In contrast to those who had yearned for the country, some residents made it clear that it was the property itself or “the view,” rather than the local community or agricultural landscape that had lured them (55, 69). These residents described the specific natural environment of their property in a way that was dissociated from the property’s location; in fact, by comparing their properties to cottage country, they often made it sound as if their property was an anomaly, an extension of the wonders of nature:

“When I drove down to see the house it reminded me of a cottage in Muskoka - how wonderful to experience that every day.” (69)
"This property's also our cottage. We're at our cottage all of the time." (55)

At least three admitted that the move had been spontaneous, "on a whim" (65, also 43):

"It was just at the end of the 60s. We were city people. I wanted- My husband- One day we were driving around and these lots were for sale." (76)

These residents considered themselves to have done very little with their land, only to have maintained it as their vision of it as an alluring landscape had been at first. This was sometimes a remarkable understatement, especially in the cases in which residents had bought original lots in one of the estate subdivisions. One woman told me about buying her property on a Sunday drive in the country. Having picked it out from a paper plat plan, she and her husband had, in her report, done nothing more than plant grass and clear out a few trees. When I asked about the sizable pond that filled most of her front yard, and around which her driveway curved, she responded, "Well, the pond was sort of here," but then amended, "We dug it out to make the pond" (43). For her, the pond had become part of the whole picture, just an element of what she considered to be the "nature" that surrounded her home.
Description of natural environment and processes

A man who had moved to his property in part because of its extensive tree cover expressed a desire to facilitate a more mixed forest (57): “I haven’t planted much at all; it’s more of selective editing.” Although this was a future plan in a way, it could also be interpreted as a simple prediction of (and contentment with) ecological processes (although he was also toying with the idea of planting more understory trees, helping the process along to fit his image of their future). For many people, the ability to participate in the ecological processes of their property had been a key motive in the move to the countryside. Many described the processes they were most fond of as well as cataloging and explaining items they notice as we walk around the property:

“Here’s coyote poop, I saw a painted turtle recently, and we have rabbits, snapping turtles, deer. The deer take the tops off the sumac – these, you can see are shorter, because they keep them trimmed, than those over there. Must be nature’s way of keeping things in balance…” (58)

“There aren’t so many wildflowers. They take longer to spread back in after it’s been cleared. Woodlands that have been grazed are set back – also areas that are reforested…” (57)

“It’s a young forest, but it’s starting to get maturity. The poplars are dying out and the oaks, of course, and the maples. The growth of the forest is continuing into a mature forest – this little pocket seems to be an ecosystem unto itself. A protected area on top of the moraine.” (69)

“And we have all the birds: indigo bunting, piliated woodpecker…[extensive list].” (72)

One couple told me about the animals they’ve seen: deer, wild turkey, porcupine, coyote and invited me into their office to show me the digital photographs they’ve taken of the wildlife they can see from the house windows (59).
Residents not only enjoyed the natural aspects of their properties, but many also did what they could to encourage nature’s processes:

“I’m making a shelter for indigenous plants. … Because of the landscape I knew growing up.” (49)

Although only one or two had registered forest management plans (for which they receive tax incentives), several residents were managing their forests to some extent, mostly with a goal of restoring plantation remnants to a natural ecosystem. These residents thinned the plantation trees, but instead of harvesting them for timber or some other profit, they left them to be recycled on the forest floor (57, 61), or even chipped them to speed up the process of decomposition. One woman explained “all kinds of things you can do to maintain the integrity” (72). Along with cutting as few trees as possible, making sure all hard surfaces (such as the driveway) were permeable, planting tenacious perennials on eroding slopes, and never using lawn chemicals, she had strategically planted trees and other vegetation to reabsorb drain water from the house.

“We catch all the water with rain barrels; I only water the plants in hanging baskets. We catch all the water from the roof, service the whole house. We have a 5,000 gallon cistern and treat it with ceramic filters, same’s you would at a lake.” (72)
Not all residents agreed about what was "natural." Although some residents placed a high value on what they considered to be the native ecosystem of their property and would support this ecosystem by digging out escaped garden plants (such as Vinca) and other introduced species (77), most were much more interested in a looser definition of natural: "If things naturalize, that's fine with me, 'long as they look natural" (72). This referred to a hosta line at the lawn-forest interface, and she continued, "Things just grow, you know. So I just leave it, let it be natural. The big effort is to keep people from tidying it up." This resident (from an agricultural background) had a definite view of what was natural and what was not, but it was based more on overall effect and a general sense of complexity, rather than on particular species (she also pointed out that she had planted goutweed, but the "less invasive" type). Another resident described efforts to, "create a natural look" (52):

"We don't want a landscaped look. Our gardener put in a rock bed — to look like a river bed — but there's a lot of washout. We're trying to get some plants in..."

For this resident, what was important was that the garden reflect plants of Ontario, not necessarily of the local area (or of the local topography, with no rivers). For the majority of residents in my study, naturalness was inherent in the plant material and they were happy to plant the annual flowers available at the nursery, or a small vegetable garden. Many were
planting while we talked, and this yearly ritual was clearly a satisfying way to reacquaint themselves with their properties, unencumbered by concerns about whether these flowers were, in fact, natural enough.

![Figure 5.4. Natural enough: successful vegetable gardens in the study area were almost always in raised beds, due to the poor soil of the area (58).]

Of much more concern to many residents than issues of the naturalness of their vegetation were issues of environmental concern, especially the spraying of pesticides.

“A big thing is that we don’t spray anymore. We used to spray, but our daughter came home from school and said it wasn’t a good thing, and we knew it wasn’t, but... We stopped. We don’t get the same lush growth. It’s hard to keep grass under the trees.” (75)

“I’ve finally persuaded my husband not to spray. That was a big victory. It’s been difficult for him, to not spray – it doesn’t look quite the same. I had an organic lawn guy out a couple of weeks ago, and I told my husband it would be like organic spray, but the guy said there really isn’t any such thing, it’s more aerating and handweeding and learning to live with it...” (76)

“When we had the gypsy moth infestation, we were calling each other up in the neighbourhood to try to figure out what to do. ... [graphic descriptions of extent of infestation]... What we did, as a group, we hired an airplane, and we had them spray. You could hear them chewing. Everybody was trying to come up with a way. Creosote and pesticides would damage the environment, be unhealthy – we finally decided on BT...” (77)

This last passage summed up an appreciation for a shared approach to the landscape that was especially prevalent in the non-subdivision parts of the study area. Not only could these residents enjoy their life in the country, but they could also share that relationship with the
natural environment and the behaviours and attitudes it entailed with their neighbours. This example evokes both the security and comfort that this provides for these residents, that especially in times when decisions need to be made about dealing with problems or change, they could communicate with each other and base their decisions on common assumptions and goals.

**Life in the Country**

Descriptions of how residents lived up to their expectations of the countryside were an important part of the interview. Residents expressed their satisfaction with the landscape largely through descriptions of the enjoyable and satisfying things that they did in it, especially actions for enjoying (consuming) the amenity aspects of the natural environment, and also ways of participating in (producing) those amenity aspects, such as hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, and the trail clearing and mowing required to sustain those activities.

“We have a boardwalk between the trees. Every morning, I go out with my coffee, and walk through the woods... the birds...” (45)

“From time to time we mow right around the perimeter with a tractor. There are interconnected trails nearby to the Bruce trail – we cross country ski, bike, hike.” (75)

“It’s nice to be able to talk a nice long walk on your own property.” (58)

“We look at it. We go back and enjoy the trails. The kids are getting older – they can go on hikes now. There are three fence rows as you go back across the property and then it goes back and hooks up with the Bruce trail. Good hikes. Good on the ski-doo. I went mountain biking, once. Joined the Inglewood cycling club, but you know, there are so many things to do...” (55)

“The woods. That’s where we go. I come home and I’ll just sit up on the balcony and at look out at the woods, and I’m centred.” (76)

There was a certain performative element to the actions of residents in their country recreation. Although residents clearly were genuine in their enjoyment of these activities, in
a certain sense they seemed to be acting out the role expected of a country resident. Almost everyone along the Bruce trail praised it strongly (even those who indicated that they spent only a few hours per week outdoors), but only one or two residents described unique activities in which they engaged on their properties, such as a game played in the woods involving the “meeting log” in “Grampy’s Secret Cove” (a clearing in the woods) (58).

I encountered a creative (if misguided) method for engaging with deer. Commenting that I’d like to look at the back of the property, which appeared to be sectioned off into mowed space separated from the yard around the house by a low stone wall and line of trees. The resident became quite excited and explained, “we’ve created little sanctuaries up here” (75). He had mowed paths and pockets in the woods for the deer. He had a saltlick, which he was strategically moving closer to the house in order to lure the deer into view. The amount of energy invested and enjoyment gleaned from this activity was characteristic of the activities residents chose for using their property. The opportunity to do something active, visible, and personally meaningful came across as one of the most important aspects of the property for many residents, especially those who were retired but also those with children. The property – with space to run around, trees to climb or trim, and a host of chores always needing to be done – provides a ready forum for family interaction and a pleasant diversion from indoor or sedentary work.

And fundamentally, the property offers a medium for the realization of a worldview, the materials to exercise the aesthetic impulse to create a pleasing world (Tuan 1989). These visions of the countryside sum up both the sentiment of creation, and of simple appreciation that suffused many expressions of satisfaction with the countryside:

“Everybody has an idea, right? My idea is that it be nice and clean, not polished, but nice trees and flowers - and the weeds grown more than flowers... It’s country. It can’t be too polished. I don’t like junk around the house, but... The second street north, the new
subdivision, houses like mansions, the landscapes are polished. You can only do so much with your means. I would like some, I wouldn’t mind some wildflowers.” (68)

“I know this area very well – I’ve lived here for 20 years. I’m kind of an amateur naturalist. I’m always looking at things. The deer … We share a deer herd with Kingscross. There’s Happy Valley, a couple thousand acres of unroaded bush. … A lot of people have told me they’ve seen wolves, not coyotes there. One person told me they sighted a bear cub – a reliable person. …[And south of here,] that was all field, five years ago. Twenty five years ago, the chickens were walking across the road. At Jane and Major MacKenzie there was this pet food place forever, a staging point for migrating geese – 5,000 geese at a time. That’s the kind of stuff I moved here for.” (67)

Change

Contrasting the “stuff” for which residents had moved to the countryside are the changes brought by development: the stuff residents moved away from. Stories about the move to the country were often emphasized with stories about the horror of the city, and residents were quick to point out that the city seemed to be following them.

Table 5.4. Interview Results: Change/Development

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Residents discussed change both in answer to my questions about it and also brought it up in relation to other topics in the interviews. A distinction is clear between the discussion of large scale and small scale change in both the content and tone of the responses, although residents would sometimes contradict each other in their descriptions of change in a particular area. Seeming contradictions between the nine residents who claimed, “It’s pretty stable” (65) or “I don’t think there will be pressure from development” (50) and the others...
(almost half) who predicted dire change were generally a difference in scope. The stability discussed was in the immediate neighbourhood, where “everybody tries to keep it as it is” (65); change was in the larger area.

“What I’ve seen is mostly many new houses going in, very private, with lots of woods and it makes me happy because they’re not going to subdivide, this area is just going to have nice houses.” (52)

Small scale changes such as a new home or horse facility in the neighbourhood were discussed as immediate and concrete but (generally) unthreatening; large scale changes, especially related to the extension of high density subdivisions out from Toronto, were presented in more emotional and menacing language.

“I don’t like the fact that all the houses are coming — I suppose one could call this urban sprawl. They just put the houses out in the middle of everywhere. Who knows whether they will subdivide the lots around here?” (42)

“I have some real concerns, you see one of those massive malls, an edifice of commercialism with a sea of brown asphalt rooves, these vast tracts of monotonous ticky tack houses, with an occasional mom and tot lot. What kind of community will ever arise? Street loaded with parked cars, weeping pea shrubs? They can be consumers. Then they wonder why there’s vandalism.” (57)

“I can see us sitting here on top of the Moraine with our bit of forest and the subdivisions right up to us.” (69)

Especially in the King study area, where a current plan to connect the town to Toronto’s sewage system is a topic of hot debate, residents emphatically stated their positions on growth and the problems of development:

“A lot of the land in King is owned by developers. If it’s not by the plan, he can go to the OMB and he’ll get it, but will he spend the expense for 40 houses on 100 acres, when he can go to Vaughn — but now they’ve filled all those places – We don’t want the sewers, we want a local sewer system so we can have local control of the development … it’s right up to the borders…” (67)

“Maple – I think it’s shocking. They try to sneak in as close as possible to get in on what King has.” (72)
A conceptual edge was described in the interviews between changes seen as inexorable in the larger context (spreading development) and the stability hoped for in the immediate locale (pleasant countryside). This was highlighted with frequent resort to visions of an “oasis” in a spreading “sea of brown asphalt roofs” of “these vast tracts of monotonous ticky-tacky houses,” and also by use of language affirming the difference between “country” and “city.”

“I’m not happy about the amount of development going on as it’s been going. This was a quiet country spot, now that much traffic on that small road, crazy.” (67)

Local control, higher quality, community, and the rapidity of change were common themes in the discussion of large scale change.

One or two residents who thought that the area would remain stable justified their predictions with economic or legislative explanations. One woman saw that the appeal of the countryside had declined for young families, partly due to commuting and daycare problems, and was wistful that the development of the residential countryside had petered out, “There are a lot of houses in here for sale, and they take a long time to sell” (76). Another saw the preservation of the countryside from development in more gleeful terms:

“[Change] in this area? No, it’s protected by the Niagara Escarpment Plan as a core greenland. No services, not likely to get them. So I’m safe, home free, nah-ne-nah, ne nyah nyah.” (57)

An insight gained from the survey on this question was that at least a few residents saw development, especially economic development, as desirable, but were convinced that development would not change the character or identity of the area.

Many of the best descriptions of what it is that residents value about their home landscape occurred in their rallies against change and development. Although many were short on description of why they had chosen the area when asked, they were able to paint an evocative picture of the wildlife, agriculture, and open pastoral landscape that they had
moved to the area to enjoy when faced with the spectre of expanding development brought up by my question, "How do you feel about changes occurring in this area?"

As discussions about change in the area followed closely upon questions about why this resident had chosen to live there, residents were faced with a comparison of their own experience and choices and those of the residents perceived to be driving the large scale expansion of development. By juxtaposing conversation about these two emotionally laden topics, I hoped to bring out a more explicit dialogue the phenomenon frequently labelled "last settler syndrome" (Lee 1984). A significant number of residents [6] rose to my challenge and discussed their moral dilemma of the desire to preserve their own idyll from the attempts of others to realize the same thing.

“For years there’s been a proposed development and it’s interesting the different responses. I’ve never felt I could say they shouldn’t build a subdivision, since I moved into a subdivision.” (76)

“I’m a bit of a realist – development will take place, you just try to control it; make it as unobtrusive as possible.” (75)

Many residents were also well informed and quite vocal about the planning process, the politics surrounding it, and their opinion of prevailing views in the literature on exurban settlement patterns.

“I don’t have a problem with development, people have to live somewhere – but I’d like it clustered more.” (42)

“I know people have to have a place to live, but there’s a tremendous lack of planning. I think it’s a shame. The greed is so horrendous. It seems to be development for the sake of development. All to do with greed and lack of insight and foresight. Planning and choices have been terrible. They should have learned – terrible foresight.” (69)

“Hydrologists and political scientists think we should live all together, clumped by the highway. But what about people who think about the land, take care of it? If you are managing, if you are custodians…” (77)

Finally, some of the most insightful residents mentioned the ways in which the people who lived on the land could learn to live there better, and could take action to make it the
way they wanted, and keep it from changing in ways they were against. These few residents were those most involved in local governance, and were also deeply engaged in the processes of their own properties (and often those of their neighbours). They spoke about the pressures on farming and the ways in which the communities could face them, about planning and the advances that the municipalities of King and Caledon had made in the past 30 years, and about the many small ways that the citizens of these communities were taking action to face change.

“We really have to think about what we do with the land.” (77)

Cultural Themes

Table 5.5. Interview Results: Cultural Themes

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Rurality

Although most residents confirmed that the rural aspect was important to their experience of the place when asked, “How much was the rural landscape a factor in deciding to move here?”, many responded negatively to the follow up question, “Do you consider this ‘rural’?” This discrepancy was fairly consistent, and may demonstrate the conceptual difficulties residents face concerning the identity of the residential countryside. A common pattern of response was a strong affirmation of the rural qualities of the place followed by a qualifying statement about the reality or authenticity of those rural qualities.

“I don’t think there’s much rural – there are fields and people farm them. There are farmers, but they always have to have a sideline. This area has a lot of – I call them hobby farms. The people don’t live there.” (74)

“There wasn’t much [farming] – this is stone country. This was obviously an old farm, but…” (64)
“If you mean anything that’s not urban...” 59

“The coyotes were a problem for the farmers, well, they’re not really farmers, they’re mostly wealthy business men with horses.” (69)

“There was more of a rural feel to it then, now it’s more of a long distance suburb. ...in the early 70s, the school had more of a rural feeling than it does now, a combination of village kids... Now the school population is more kids from subdivisions and people who’ve built homes.” (76)

It was in this aspect of the interview that differences between residents with rural and urban backgrounds became more apparent. Those who had grown up in rural areas, especially on farms, were quickest to point out that this was not a real rural area (although many of them added that they wished that it was).

[Do you consider this rural?]“Very much so.” [Replying to the statement, “I appreciate the simplicity of life out of the city,”] “Strongly agree,” but added, “It’s not so simplistic.” (73)

“We were the last house. It was all wild from here on. We lived in the village of King. I wanted to move to a farm, but ... this was as close as I could get.” (49)

“This isn’t real country living. I wish it were.” (72)

[How much was the rural landscape...?] “No, because then we would have to go on the farm – I would have gone when I was young...” (68)

City People

Some residents drew a clear distinction between themselves and city people, using representations of themselves as having a farming background, doing things themselves rather than paying someone to do them, or having the amount of money associated with “city people.”

“Basically, I’m not a city person and don’t need to be manicured. These places aren’t for people who want manicured. You don’t come out and try to change everything, because you would drive out the things you came for. ... I’m the farm girl and you live with nature.” (72)
"Maybe if we would have more money, we would plant more. But I do it all with my hands." [we have a long conversation about the enjoyment of doing it with your hands, and how people with money don't have to, but they may not get the enjoyment out of it.] (68)

"There's a lot of people with money. They don't have to do anything. ... There are two kinds of people who move to the country. 'Oh, isn't this wonderful,' then suddenly there's mosquitoes, grass to cut. People come to the country thinking it's an idyllic place, but coyotes do get your cat, mosquitoes bite." (68)

"The neighbour moved in and immediately fenced the whole thing. All the way around the property. I don't know. He's just afraid. I find people who move out of the city often don't have any sense of the countryside. The first thing that goes up is an electronically controlled fence and posted notices. No nothing on their property!" (57)

"Our kids grew up in town – they like to visit, but I don't think they see this as their idea of perfection. Both wives grew up in big cities." (59)

Although too few residents completed the survey questions related to this issue, a clear relationship existed between items relating to the city and those relating to local control and identity. Most of the participants were from cities, but almost all of them chose to identify with non-urban ideological themes such as community, agrarianism, and local uniqueness and control. Residents scoring high on items of engagement with the local landscape were unlikely to express economic ties with the city, while strong economic ties with the city were connected with identification with only the more superficial aspects of country life – a general sense of rural tradition without the specific aspects of local commitment that characterized the less city-connected residents.

I did not ask questions about issues between oldtimers and newcomers, or about the relationship between the city and the country, but I found the representation of the divide between city and country people interesting, especially in light of the fact that only one resident was born in the area, and that most had moved from the city (where many had grown up). Both from the survey, and from interviews with residents who considered themselves more established, I received the message that people who are newcomers understand the
ideals of the countryside, or at least find them desirable, without necessarily understanding the processed required to sustain those ideals, or wanting them. However, the constructed nature of identity and culture must be considered when analysing these results. The residents were not unconscious of their derogatory use of "city"; describing the efforts of her neighbour to sell his completely wooded property, a woman laughingly told me, "Real estate agents have told Denis he’ll have to clear out the brush, city it up" (77).

**Learning to live in the country**

One of the issues brought into the interview by residents' comments on city people was the process of learning to live in the country. Although newcomers might be involved in this process, it was usually more established residents who shared their experience of learning to behave in a "country" way, both in terms of interacting with the landscape, and also in terms of the cultural expectations of interacting with the landscape. As almost all of the residents had moved into the study area, and as most of them were not from a rural or exurban background, some sort of learning experience had been necessary, especially for those who became very engaged with their property – they needed to learn how. Residents discussed this learning process in relation both to learning how to take care of the landscape, but also how to comport oneself in the culture of the countryside:

"It’s a learning experience, when you move out here, if you want a lawn and a fence. If you came because you like the trees and you like the country...you might be more likely to learn, as opposed to the other people who might be likely to go back.” (72)

"As a landscape contractor, you get called to advise people what to do with their land. A lot of them will inherit a part of an old field with a nice hedgerow, and you can suggest to them that they should keep it, work with it, let it seed back in the areas that were cleared.” (57)
Residents did not concentrate only on learning, but also on how to teach people to live in the country. A common theme, especially in the more equestrian area, was fences and the failure of the equestrian community to incorporate the new generation of residents in the hunt:

“There used to be a tremendous equestrian group. You could ride anywhere, now it’s gated. They haven’t imbued in them a respect for being able to move across the properties, nor for keeping the trails maintained; the new people just don’t understand what it takes to maintain the trails. So what you get is people who come in and put up big electronically controlled gates and close off their properties and think they can buy enough land that they don’t need to ride on other people’s property. But even with the largest farm, who wants only to ever ride on your own farm?” (53)

Others showed me the changes in their properties that had come with the diminution of the hunt – overgrown paths, gates in disrepair – and lamented the loss of neighbourliness that open properties had symbolised. A resident whose garden was on the garden tour spoke of it as an opportunity for people to learn, and for bridges to be built between people who were living in harmony with nature and those who would like to, but don’t know how (72). And residents responded positively to my request for an interview in part because they were interested in helping the cause of gathering more information about living in the countryside to help those who want to live there do so more successfully. Although not everyone was equally committed to principles of ecology or environmental sustainability, most residents commented on the desirability of a healthy environment, and of keeping their area from following in the steps of more urban neighbouring municipalities.

A few residents who were very interested in the concept of promoting narratives of a healthy countryside talked about “grassroots bridging” and ways “to make it more community rural” (76). They referred to organizations such as the Caledon Countryside Alliance, a citizens’ group committed to keeping Caledon part of the countryside, especially through education about stewardship and environmental awareness, as being the way that
"the next generation of people who've chosen to live up here" are working to shape the landscape and the way that people imagine the landscape.

Landscape Interpretation: the Property

In a group of properties ranging from an acre to one hundred acres and in two separate areas and two different types of settlement pattern, there is clearly a wide variety of landscape treatments given to individual properties. What I will report here are the salient landscape patterns; patterns that were notably repeated within the study area, and that grouped together in clusters to form larger recognizable patterns. Landscape treatment patterns that related to content in the interviews or survey or that showed significant change between study areas or property type will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Although there was a large variation in aspects of landscape treatment, and a comprehensive description of all the things that residents of the countryside are doing with their properties is beyond the scope of this thesis, the basic set of patterns that emerged from the analysis of the landscape treatment schematic maps was very commonly repeated. This was surprising; while I was recording the details of each property, the variation seemed staggering, and the patterns which coalesced out of the maps seemed too simple to incorporate all that I had seen. However, each of the sets of patterns below is a general pattern, in the Alexander tradition, and can be expanded into a wide variety of
manifestations. General patterns will be described first, then these general patterns will be illustrated with examples from the study areas. Finally, the ways in which the patterns interact will be presented.

**The Yard: the Lawn, the Trees, and Outdoor Room Spaces**

The most focused attention in each property is given to the area around the house, the yard. Yards are almost always defined by some sort of lawn, but unlike a more suburban pattern in which lawn is the dominant land use, the exurban yard is only partially dependent upon a lawn, which in over half of the properties, is limited to the area immediately connected to the house. The lawn is intimately related to the house, and is connected to the house building by a transitional foundation planting. The lawn is often shaped in relation to the house shape and one of its functions is to relate the house to the surrounding matrix, often by tapering into a less care-intensive format. Lawns almost always transition into trees at the periphery of the property, however, the size of the lawn seems to be determined more by the size and shape of the house than by the size of the property.

Figure 5.5 Lawn areas of the yard tend to be determined by the house, not by the property.

Much larger properties are not more likely to have much larger lawns, but rather to have a more varied transition between lawn and edge trees.
The transition into trees in some ways mirrors the foundation plantings; from the elevation of the house, down through the ornamental trees and shrubs to the perennial and annual flowers, out through the expanse of the lawn, then up through the transition into forest.

Figure 5.6. Section view of the lawn-forest transition

The transition is often decided by the topographic relationship of the house to the property. The majority of houses are built on rises (which are bermed if not naturally available), and lawns often end, or become meadow, perennial or vegetable garden, or trees, where the rise falls off. On properties where horses are kept, paddocks form the most significant transition between lawn and forest and often give an impression of more extensive lawns from a distance. Properties situated in sugar maple bush where very few trees were taken down to build the house often have an abbreviated version of the foundation planting-lawn-planting-forest transition.

Many residents have planted trees (see interview analysis), and a common transition between lawn and forest is young forest. Young forests come in three basic varieties. The first are forests that have been seeded by adjacent trees and are spreading out from the existing forest, plantation, or hedgerows. This is most common in areas where land was cleared for agriculture before residential development, and often gives a strong impression of the forest creeping up on the lawn. Residents frequently used the word “encroaching” to describe the phenomenon, especially when the forest was spreading not so much by the
growth of new seedlings out in a more grassy area, but rather through spreading stands of sumac or other dense understory plants. The second type are forests that have been planted by the residents (or by someone contracted by the residents). These are more common in areas where tree-planting is encouraged by agencies, such as the Credit Valley Conservation Authority in the Caledon study area or the Ministry of Natural Resources. The third are forests which fall somewhere between being passively allowed and actively cultivated, usually rough pasture or an area that was mowed or bushhogged, then allowed to grow.

By far the most common transition between lawn and trees is another band of plantings. This is almost always perennial and is frequently related, both genetically and aesthetically, to the foundation planting. It commonly includes hosta, vinca, lilies, and "wildflowers," and is very often interspersed with forest understory species which have colonized the transitional area; this is often reciprocated by the planting species which spread into the edge of the forest understory.

Another notable set of ways in which the lawn makes the transition into trees involves a much more abrupt relationship between lawn and trees, usually achieved by mowing. The most basic manifestation is, of course, the lawn mowed neatly up to an edge at
which the forest starts, but other permutations of this relationship include mowing directly into the forest to clear the understory (and sometimes to encourage lawn in the forest) and mowing the forest itself, or bushhogg ing. Although the forest-lawn interface is sometimes eliminated by siting the house directly adjacent to trees, this adjacency is usually only on one side of the house; only on one property in the study (77) did the forest canopy directly envelop the house.

Figure 5.8. House sited directly in trees (left); view from the windows (right) (69).

In contrast to the open envelope created around the house by the lawn are the trees. In both study areas, the landscape matrix of the residential areas is forest. The forest is not a particularly old forest; most of it was cleared for agriculture, charcoal, or tannins within the past century (Baker 2001). As neither the Niagara Escarpment nor the Oak Ridges Moraine soils proved particularly profitable for farming, they were not kept cleared, and extensive government-sponsored tree plantings in response to blow sand conditions in the 1930s helped reforest the areas more rapidly. The existing forest is comprised of fairly mature plantation remnants and stands of coniferous trees and extensive patches of young to maturing deciduous forest. Large sections of the Caledon study areas are sugar maple bush.

A stereotypical (disapproving) image of residential development shows extensive clearing of forest, usually accompanied by bulldozing of the soil into convenient buildable
lots. This image has been strongly reinforced by the extensive development on the outskirts of megalopolitan Toronto. Examination of the aerial photographs of the Caledon and King study areas, however, show that the development of almost all residential lots within the study areas was executed with a minimal disturbance of existing forest. House lots were arranged in such a pattern as to fit houses into existing gaps in the edge of the canopy and in areas where trees were displaced by the building of a house, the forest was often cleared with a gap of only one to four meters around the building. Large portions of the Grange Sideroad, Caledon Mountain Estates and Kingscross Estates had been pasture prior to residential development, however, extensive planting of yard and forest trees has given a sylvan (or at least scrub) character to all areas except for the most recently converted sections of the estate subdivisions (they were both built in several phases) and the areas of the Grange Sideroad still used for horses.
Figure 5.11. The Caledon horse landscape: lawn-like paddocks, and new uses for them.

Individual properties interact with the forest matrix in a number of ways. As discussed above, on most properties the house is surrounded by a lawn. Aside from the realm of the lawn and associated gardens are the trees that residents plant on their properties. These three components, the lawn, the gardens, and the planted trees, along with the forest matrix make up the components which shape the space of the property. I have already discussed the fact that the most common thing to do with property was to plant trees. However, despite the fact that so many of the residents plant trees on their properties, aside from the few residents involved in Credit Valley Conservation Authority tree planting schemes, most plant only a few tree species, independent of the forest matrix. Blue spruce and Norway maple are extremely common, as are Arbor vitae. Remnants of American elm alleés and old hedgerows of sugar maples are also quite prevalent, evidence that these trees were once the popular ones and possibly that only a few species tend to be widely popular at once! Trees are usually planted in one of three methods: rows, patches, or individuals.

Figure 5.12. Blue spruce berm plantings for eventual tree line (note single deciduous) (40).
Deciduous trees are more likely to be planted as specimen – on their own in an expanse of lawn (which the residents are trying to keep alive as the tree canopy spreads), or in small clumps, especially of fruit, decorative, or bird attracting trees. Coniferous trees are much more likely to be planted in clumps (usually of three trees) or in rows.

Figure 5.13. Screen of trees between house and back paddocks (64).

Figure 5.14. Five foot mown alley between closely planted tree lines (56).

Screens of trees planted in rows, usually blue spruce, were the most common landscape feature observed. Screens were used between properties, at the side and back boundaries as well as the road boundary (often with decorative or real fences); between the house and road; along driveways (with gates at road); between front and back yards (often with some sort of gateway); and around the lawn, between the house area and the rest of the property. When there was one tree line, there were often more. Whereas residents tended to buy deciduous trees singly, or in small groups (partly because of their cost), several residents had made one-time purchases of large batches of spruce seedlings, which they kept in seedling areas and planted out as they had
time and inclination. These spruce tended to end up in lines, and several properties were
riddled with them (29 properties had tree lines).

In combination, the components of the lawn and the trees as matrix, specimen, and
screens create an effect of outdoor room spaces. Lawns create human accessible open spaces
while the trees create boundaries, not only of access, but also of sight and sound. The idea of
outdoor room spaces has been well described (Schroeder 1993; Downing 1859; Ruff 1979),
but it is particularly well developed on properties in this study. The view from each house is
composed by these spaces and contained within them. Very few houses have clear views
either of the road, or of other houses, even when they are quite nearby. This is a contrast
with the landscape aesthetic described by Punter. In his description, houses were more likely
to be constructed with a good view of (and from) the road. Trees were cut to enhance the
presentation of the house, and large expanses were given over to lawns (442). Although
some of the apparent difference may be due to my focus on a smaller area, aerial
photographs show a marked gain in forest cover between 1971 and 1997. Both woodlot and
planted trees have grown considerably, and views from the road have been limited.
Decorative plantings have become large, especially around the subdivisions. Even in areas
where few trees were cut down, gaps created by road-making, construction activity, and the installation of utilities have almost entirely disappeared by 1997 (making the study areas difficult to locate in a photograph!) Two of the changes resulting from this increase in forest cover is the de-emphasis on the front yard as a display area, and the related enclosure of yard spaces into room-like areas.

On properties with a significant view (often off the Escarpment), the side of the yard facing the view (usually the back) is arranged as an informal viewing area, with chairs and tables oriented to the view. This space is often related to the interior of the house (also oriented to the view) through large windows and porches. The yard on the other side of the house, a nominal front yard, tends to be small and very enclosed and to function as an extension of the entry area of the house. While the view side is open, with perforations in the trees to allow for the view and windows to the house, the front side is quite enclosed by forest and foundation plantings, much like a mowed forest clearing.

Figure 5.17.
Front lawn room space, Caledon Mountain Estates: the mowed forest clearing.
This contrast of open and enclosed areas is also common in properties without panoramic views, especially those within a woodlot matrix. Elements of the property are arranged in order to create interesting or pleasing spaces, or to screen views of neighbours or the road. Front yards are usually screened from the street and emphasize their contained feeling with a lawn that ends neatly at and is contained by the forest (or the transition to the forest, above).

![Figure 5.18. Enclosed front yard spaces: volleyball court, left (68); pool, right (71).](image)

Back yards interface with the forest in a more ragged manner, with lawn areas sometimes trailing into paths, barbeque or children’s recreation areas, or other, adjacent outdoor room spaces. Although spaces for doing things – barbeque/eating, clothes drying, play (swingset, trampoline), pool, nature watching, and garden areas – were sometimes distributed around the property, they were much more likely to be grouped together, frequently in adjacent room spaces screened by trees, hedges, or shrubbery. Together with the protective envelope space around the house defined by the lawn proper, these spaces created a mosaic of different functions and feelings of interaction with the surrounding landscape.
In less forested areas, where houses had been built in a more agricultural and open
matrix, the contrast between open and enclosed areas of the property followed a more
conventional front/open, back/enclosed pattern, although similar vegetative partitions were
used. Suburban style open front lawns were found in these areas [9], and lawns tended to be
larger and more related to the street or property boundaries rather than the trees, as in the
woodlot properties. Another use of mown lawn was as a path between areas of a property,
especially on the larger properties.
As described above (in Life in the Country), walking around one's property was a relished part of the country experience, and at least sixteen properties had trails or paths. These were often through the forest, woodlot, or regenerating scrub, and the paths connected room spaces, allowing them to be open to each other but also contained. Paths present an easy way to be in the landscape, and also an excuse for being in the landscape, and residents often suggested that I try out their (sometimes extensive) trails. Especially on larger properties, the scenery adjacent to the path was that with which the residents were most familiar, and paths offer a way to check up on forest management, get away from the domestic areas of the property, and, in some cases where the drive meanders through the property on the way to the house like a path, offers a trip through the woods, and a reminder of the value of life in the country, between house and the rest of the world.

Figure 5.21. Mowed verge by road in red pine plantation (note mowing under trees) (59).
The Survey

Only half of the residents who participated in the interview and landscape analysis also completed the survey questionnaire (N=15). This limited number of responses made it difficult to integrate the survey responses with the interview and property data, but based on the preliminary analysis reported below, the survey seems promising enough to make use of it in the future. Preliminary factor analysis of the results from this small sample showed similar distinct factor groupings to those found in the test run (N=38). These groupings strongly reflected the categories used in the survey design, with items involving such topics as development, local economy, cultural influence, and the environment grouped together. This sample, however, is too small for appropriate analysis, and the analyses reported below were performed on the combined responses of the residents of the study areas and those of the test run participants (who live nearby, although not necessarily within the boundaries of the study areas) (N=53).

Some items were excluded from the analysis of the scale for engagement with the local landscape, but will be retained in the questionnaire to be considered as individual items (these are items that are interesting without necessarily being part of the construct of engagement with the local landscape). Two items were excluded from the final version of the scale in this study because they had been changed, but they may be included in future versions of the scale. Items were also excluded that were heavily skewed (where all respondents answered similarly) (skew > 2), or whose correlation with the total of all of the items was less than .10. The remaining 35 items demonstrated an Alpha reliability coefficient of .85, indicating that this scale is a highly reliable measure of a single construct, which I have designated as engagement with the local landscape.
Scores on this measure of engagement with the local landscape were normally distributed, but fell into a truncated range between neutral and high. Originally, I had hoped to be able to compare survey data with the data from the landscape analysis, and also to compare differences in survey data between King and Caledon, and between those with differences in the landscape data. However, there are currently not enough survey results from residents who were interviewed. Those analyses will have to be done later in the project. For the fifty residents who reported their length of residence on the questionnaire, engagement was correlated with length of residence ($r = .28$, $r^2 = .08$, $p = .05$, 2-tailed). This linear relation was just on the edge of significance, and a non-linear, quadratic model fit the data much better ($R^2 = .27$, $p < .01$), see Figure 5.22.

![Figure 5.22. Engagement with local landscape as a quadratic function of length of residence.](image-url)
Chapter 6: DISCUSSION

The stories that describe life and landscape of the residential countryside, as well as the actual landscape of the residential countryside, demonstrate adherence to a rural and ecological ideal. Although the reasons people give for moving to the countryside (and what they do with it once there) vary greatly, a commonality among stories of the desire to live in the country is enjoyment of the amenities of a non-urban and forested landscape. However, the desire to live in the countryside is not necessarily accompanied by a deep understanding of what it means to live in the countryside, especially in terms of the future sustainability of the landscape considered desirable. Attitudes expressed toward aspects of the countryside such as trees and agriculture do not support a full enough operation of these systems to be sustainable. Instead, many residents want to enjoy a somewhat superficial participation in the processes of the countryside, consuming benefits such as pastoral views, clean air and water, location in a woodlot, and the perceived ideals of the countryside such as community values, without understanding or participating in the processes required to sustain these benefits and ideals.

This shallow level of engagement, if widespread, is not universal. Residents who are highly engaged with their properties are more aware than those who are not of historical and ecological processes in their area and are more involved in local politics and community action. These residents recognize the discrepancy between desire and practice in the context of the countryside ideal and are working to address it. Residents who have lived in the area longer, and who are very active both in the community and with their properties, are also more aware of the situation and more involved in efforts to address it. Newer residents are
more likely to be interested in participation in the more superficial aspects of rural identity and less concerned about long term effects of change and development. However, these newer residents, if not fully informed as to the processes and reality behind their image of the countryside, are enthusiastic about its potential. They have imagined themselves as being a part of this countryside, and are often looking for ways to realize this image.

The relation of land uses, stories and motivations

The use of three very different methods allowed me not only to look at the research questions from different points of view, but also to compare the usefulness of the methods used. Points of discrepancy did arise between the information collected using the different methods, but these disjunctures (which were usually about ecological or planning processes) were more revealing than problematic; they allowed me to see the difference between the landscape as an ecological phenomenon and the landscape as its residents experience it and imagine it to be. Although the landscape analysis provided the most concrete information about what residents were doing with their land, the interviews were an important modifier to my interpretation of the landscape. I could begin to see the elements of landscape patterned with the meaning explained to me by the residents, in addition to my own set of perceptions (and long list of questions) about the landscape.

Residents were able to tell me about what they did with the property, and what they liked about it, but it was difficult for them to communicate why. My experience of this difficulty in preliminary work prompted me to include the survey questionnaire, which was designed to explore topics that often remained implicit. A lack of explanatory depth was fairly uniform in the interviews with regard to motives and preferences; for these residents,
things just are the way they are, and they like what they like. When I asked one couple about their motivations or influence for making their house into what they called "a country estate" (55), they responded, "I don't think we've had that kind of vision — I see this as us building our own kind of paradise," implying a very strong vision, while simultaneously denying any vision. This resulted in their avoiding any detailed answer to my question. I was frustrated by this tendency of respondents to remain at the surface of their explanations, especially in more obvious cases, such as those in which residents repeatedly claimed that they had done nothing with their property (this was usually interspersed with descriptions of the things that they had done).

When asked what might have influenced them to do something, only a very small minority could think of anything. The conditions in which very little came out about motivations or influences — at the beginning of the interviews, or during the interviews in which the residents never became fully comfortable, or when asked directly about it — add strength to the hypothesis that our understanding of our engagement with the landscape tends to be implicit. A methodological implication is that it is better to create an interview situation which allows the interviewee in some way to relive or conceptually participate in the experience being talked about, rather than just to think about it rationally (Svoboda 2000). This is duly supported by the empirical evidence gained from interviews in which residents walked around the property while talking with me. These interviews tended to be much more profitable than those in which residents attempted to answer my questions about their property without the aid of the property itself. Unsurprisingly, exceptions (52 and 55) were residents who were engaged in significant projects to alter their property, and whose
experiential and rational experiences of the property had been brought into examination during this process (Potteiger & Purinton 1998).

The implicitness and lack of explanatory depth described above was highly uniform across different aspects of the interview. It was present not only in the questions about motivation and influences, but also in specific questions about what residents had done with their properties, why they had chosen to move to the country, and what they were planning to do with their property in the future. It is certainly plausible that lack of explanatory depth in plans for the future was caused by the same hurdles of implicitness that descriptions of experience of the landscape seemed to face – or that residents were embarrassed or unwilling to share their plans with someone perceived to be an ‘expert’ or a judging eye. However, my sense of the interviews, especially as most were conducted on the property, where the sight of things not as one would like them to be might easily jog the thought of their needing to be changed, would lead me to conclude that residents without plans were in fact satisfied enough with their properties not to harbor plans to change them.

The following example illustrates satisfaction with a property, but it also reveals some of the motivational complexities lurking below the surface of explanations that are expressed in simple, general, or shallow form. One resident lived in a house placed directly in the forest, with no lawn or cleared space between the house and the trees. While we were arranging the interview, she had told me with some pride, “Mine’s very wild” (77) (her neighbours had also mentioned this). When I asked her about why she had arranged her property this way, however, she dismissed it – implying not only that it was not unusual, but also that it was not intentional – “We were too busy to do anything else. Once we moved here I was teaching, so busy, then children came. Denis would go out and chop at things…”
Her phrasing here seems to imply that she would have done something if they had not been too busy. Despite this, later in the interview, she broke out indignantly (and not in response to anything related), “The other thing – you don’t go and put lawn down on your Trilliums!” showing a clear preference for not chopping. This complex, layered explanation could be seen as contradictory, but it accurately reflects a common ambivalence in the relationship between actions and motivations (Tuan 1973, 1989). It is quite plausible that she sometimes felt that she would like more space and tidiness around the building, but that a genuine feeling that the naturalness of the property should be minimally disturbed contributed to her decision, as much as did being too busy.

This ambivalence is a product, in part, of the fact that at least some of people’s explanation for why they have done something tends to be post hoc (Nisbett & Wilson 1977). Something that post hoc explanations for actions often appeared to accomplish in the interviews was a reification, as necessities, of choices that have been made (see also Punter 1974, 440). A similar phenomenon was the tendency for residents to fall back on general explanations for their actions, sometimes even abandoning the start of a specific explanation and turning to a general one. This was most notable in explanations of the move to the countryside, where situational constraints (a new job, the inability to afford a city home, or some other opportunity or lack thereof) were subordinated to generic retellings of the common country love narrative, such as “I was just a country person at heart,” or “I had always wanted to live in the country.” The fact that most residents did not express any ambivalence they might have felt when describing what they had done may reflect that for a coherent narrative, we are often willing to sacrifice relevant information that might make our views reflect the world more accurately.
Another narrative technique through which residents seemed to be justifying their choices was the juncture of two different stories that had become causally linked, and were expressed as logical sequences, despite the fact that they were not necessarily related:

"We have a woodstove – we have to keep culling out." (72)

It is in cases such as these, where a resident has combined the usefulness of wood for heat with the management benefits of thinning in a seamless expression, that we are able to glimpse the way that people form narratives, combining separate fragments into (what one might like to imagine as) seamless worldviews. The use of causal language justifies choices; instead of being optionally connected by a choice made, two ideas become necessarily connected by the context of the narrative within which they are placed (Gergen & Gergen 1988).

The characteristics of explanations of experience described above reveal the usefulness of analyzing the material elicited in the interviews in light of the other methodologies used, and to analyze it critically, not simply taking it at face value. Stories about the landscape, and about land use, are often presented in terms of givens and necessities, but an analysis of the stories as descriptions of motivated choices gives better insight into the ways in which residents are experiencing the landscape and their land use, beyond their often post hoc explanations. In the section that follows, I present some of the themes that emerge from the analysis of the interviews as they relate to the question of sustainability.
Sustainability

When I asked what they had done with their properties, residents frequently expressed their philosophy of land use along with (or instead of) a description. These philosophies were often unselfconsciously normative and were offered as obvious explanations for actions. (This content rarely surfaced again, however, when I asked about influences or motivations.)

"We're stewards of the property for the escarpment. We only cut when necessary." (51)

"We cleaned up a lot, mostly, took a few trees down and cleaned up dead spots – pine needles. The previous owner liked things natural – I mean, we like things natural too, but a little greener." (44)

Not only does each of these sentiments exemplify philosophies of land use, the contrast between the two also illustrates the way in which the language of the residential countryside, although evocative, does not necessarily have agreed-upon meaning. A term such as "steward" might mean different or even conflicting things to different people. Property 51 lies on the edge of the Escarpment in a dense but spindly sugar maple forest. The house was built making only a small clearing, and the residents are committed to letting natural processes occur, using the term "steward" to mean that they do not interfere in natural processes and are thereby stewarding the land by protecting it from those who would interfere. The impulse to clean things up illustrated by property 49 evokes a more traditional approach to forests, in which a steward would be much more likely to protect the land for human processes, managing interference to meet human needs. These contrasting meanings reflect different conceptions of the status quo, or what might happen without stewardship, as well as what is desirable: in the first case, wanton development would ruin intact nature, in the second, intact nature would ruin productive development.
The conflict between these two conceptions of nature and stewardship illustrate the important role of culture and narrative in the approach to sustainability. Cultural aesthetics influence behavior in much more profound ways than we are generally willing to acknowledge. A widely known example of this is the devastating effect of German forest management (which prizes neatness) on forest ecosystem health and biodiversity in northern Europe (Virkkala, Rajasärkkä, Väisänen, Vickholm, & Virolainen 1994); there are many more people moving into the residential countryside than there have been German forest managers. A major question motivating this project was about how the exurban property use pattern fit into the ecological sustainability of the matrix forest and agricultural ecosystems.

The trend of increasing forest cover and the pattern of yards as outdoor room spaces represent a significant change in the exurban aesthetic of shaping the landscape between Punter’s study and mine, and may also represent significant gains in ecological interest and awareness. The trend toward increased forest cover could also be interpreted in terms of privacy, however, instead of in terms of ecology.

“What I’ve seen is mostly many new houses going in, very private, with lots of woods, and it makes me happy...” (52)

Items about privacy had to be removed from the final version of the survey measure because the responses were so uniformly positive. Privacy is a large part of the exurban appeal, and as the anecdote above demonstrated, trees are considered the appropriate instrument of privacy in exurbia, rather than the more urban or suburban fences. My interviews did not shed much light on the motives for planting trees, or on residents’ experience of these motives. A prime illustration was a man who had planted at least one hundred trees on his three acre property (although he and his wife argued through the interview about whether it had been forty or sixty trees). After he had enthusiastically run me through the entire
catalogue of trees that he had planted (1 Douglas fir, 40 Austrian pines in a square, 3 Colorado blue spruce, 5 Crimson King Norway maple, etc), he rubbed his hands and declared, “It’s going to be a real forest back here” (54). When I asked in turn, “Is a forest what you want?” he became nervous and responded hastily, “No, no, I don’t want a forest.” Changing tack, I asked very plainly why he was planting these trees and he immediately replied, “More wood lands is better than grass, for us, for the environment, for shade.” Having said this, he breaks into a conspiratorial grin and contradicts himself again, admitting that he doesn’t really like shade and likes to tan. In any case, whatever the underlying motives for more trees might be, and however difficult it may be to come to know them, many residents do not seem to be planting them for the forest.

A very common complaint is that the resident (or previous resident) has planted too many trees and the resulting “shabbiness” is now seen as a problem. This attitude confirms the preference for specimen trees over forest trees evident in the patterns of established plantings: singly or in lines. This is clearly related to the difference in image between the forest and the yard, and demonstrates a lack of understanding in the processes of the yard elements such as tree growth (Smith 1984). Although they enjoyed the forest and liked trees, residents complained about increasing canopy cover: “It’s hard to keep grass under the trees” (75) (especially without spraying, he explained, as his daughter had convinced him to stop). Despite this, saplings were frequently planted closely enough to need thinning, another difficult topic. Although residents were enthusiastic about planting trees, and viewed this as aiding (and not interfering with) natural processes, cutting trees was expressed in terms of interference and as an area where nature should be able to take care of itself.
Other commonly misunderstood aspects of property ecology were succession, species biodiversity, and hydrology. As related above, residents villainized poplar (a common early succession tree) and tended to strive for plantings of uniform age (tree lines are more impressive this way). Blue spruce, Norway maple, and a few other (clonally propagated) nursery trees were planted far more frequently than anything else. Ponds were the cherished desire of many residents, but their plans for them sometimes ignored the most basic topographic and ecological necessities. One man related his plan for a ninety foot waterfall (raised by a pump), which would be the mechanism to keep the water moving in his pond and consequently to avoid pond scum (62).

The aesthetic of the residential countryside is ecologically somewhat impoverished. Part of this problem can plausibly be attributed to the approach taken by government agencies toward the residential countryside. Despite reports such as Punter's, which explored the desire for country residence and its impacts, policy toward settlement in the countryside has continued to treat exurbanites as outliers and to control their use of land largely through minimum lot sizes (Davis, Nelson & Dueker 1994). Although Ministry of Natural Resources planting programs were very important for slowing erosion and promoting reforestation, the attitude of an agency responsible for such large tracts of woodland as those which exist in northern Ontario toward such small woodlots as those which could be planted on exurban lots could be considered somewhat trivializing. Especially with the budget cuts sustained under the Harris government, attention by provincial agencies to what are fundamentally urban forests has been minimal. Residents who had planted large plantations of trees through MNR programs thirty years ago were appreciative of the start offered them on their substantial woodlots, but residents who had turned to the MNR for help in more recent years
described their disappointment with the scale of the programs: trees cost too much, they complained, and had to be bought in batches of fifty trees per species. Although this had not deterred residents from planting in the cases I encountered, it usually limited the biodiversity of the property considerably. On some of the Caledon properties, subsidized plantings by the Credit Valley Conservation Authority were much more successful, with greater species diversity, lower per tree cost, and more support for the ongoing management and care of the planted forests.

Although many properties still had remnants of single species plantations, most residents had not been involved in these forestation projects and had not interacted with agencies concerning their property. In fact, although the average residence length was over 18 years, and over half of the residents had occupied the property since it was developed, only one resident had been born and brought up in the area, and few residents had any ties to those things that had gone on in the landscape before their arrival. This was made even more dramatic by the fact that both the Kingscross and Caledon Mountain Estates had been built in the early 1970s, effectively obscuring the agricultural character and boundaries of large portions of the area. Even in the non-subdivision areas, there was little highlighting of historical land uses – no markers and few traces of former land uses aside from different tree species and growth patterns such as and hedgerows and woodlots. Two residents referred to the original layout of their properties (both with remnants of the original farmhouse), but most knew only as far back as what the previous residents had done with the land.

Not everyone in the residential countryside shares the common lack of ecological knowledge. As described in Chapter 5, several residents considered themselves amateur naturalists and some of these were quite knowledgeable about natural systems and quite
involved in the processes of their property. For them, the natural environment had been the critical factor in the move to the countryside, and in general it had lived up to their expectations. These residents spent quite a bit of time out of doors (~30 hours per week) and tended to be very active in local politics. This may support theories that environmental awareness and interaction make humans more creatively engaged with the world in general and also that understanding of and engagement with natural (and agricultural) processes is important to participation in and use of democratic systems (Cobb 1977; Hanson 2000).

Action in and regarding the landscape is a domain where the relationship between aesthetics and morals becomes more apparent. As discussed above, when a resident accepts his or her landscape aesthetic as a simple preference for the way the landscape should be, this preference tends to carry moral weight, buttressed by cultural and personal narratives (Potteiger & Purinton 1998; Heidegger 1950). Punter (1974) discussed these narratives in terms of the “myth of functionalism” (440). By using stories about nature, community, and “the countryside,” residents create a comfortable conceptual space for their aesthetic preferences, one which allows them to fight in a political or cultural arena to defend their right to the enjoyment of the amenity aspects of the countryside (Hinrichs 1996; Coppack 1988). This is not to suggest that such a right does or does not exist, but to point out that the basis for arguments presented in moral terms (the wholesomeness of the countryside, the community values of the countryside, the safety, peacefulness and cleanliness of the countryside) and using moral narrative structure (Saving the Oak Ridges Moraine, conserving, protecting, fighting for the countryside) is often based on aesthetic enjoyment of
the qualities evoked, rather than participation in the processes involved in bestowing these qualities upon the countryside.

Furthermore, humans are not inherently interested in ecology (Hardin 1968; Baker 2001). There have been cultures more interested in ecology than ours, in which everyday experience was profoundly more entwined with ecological processes, but these cultures have existed under conditions where human health was intimately connected to ecological health. Modern global culture, by contrast, has inflated the ability of humans to ignore ecology by increasing the opportunity to externalize impacts of local actions to distant ecosystems as well as to use energy-intensive technologies to stave off local impacts. The ecological movements of the past thirty to forty years have made efforts to address this, but these movements have, at their core, a problem with the relationship between aesthetics and morals (Callicott 1999). Although it is far beyond the scope of this paper to speculate about the underlying causal connections between aesthetic enjoyment of ecological processes (naturalism) and moral concern for the well-being of society, these two motivators have been heavily intertwined in the narrative (ideology, language, and images) of ecological awareness in my study. Arguments for the environment are almost always clad in moral armour, which is bad enough in such a rational and litigious society, but even worse, they are often transparently based in aesthetic garb. Residents who wish to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine for excellent environmental reasons (scientific, political, ecological, moral) also happen to live on the Moraine, at least partly for aesthetic reasons.

This relationship between aesthetics and morals is both ironic and tragic — a concern for the sustainability of the narrative of the countryside, especially as an ecologically “preserved” place. When residents were able to state reasons for doing something with their
properties, they often began with the more rational explanation—"it's good for the environment"—and only after added the aesthetic—"and besides, I like it that way." It may be difficult to closely examine one's motives if there is the lurking suspicion that aesthetic reasons underlie carefully constructed moral ones. The irony here is that ecological sustainability, even if it is desired for its aesthetic benefits, is in fact good for humans (hence, morally sound). Investment in the sustainability of the countryside for moral reasons that are only deep enough to justify an otherwise aesthetic interest, however, tends to be superficial and inadequate. In order to engage with the issues surrounding sustainability at a more substantial level, it would be useful to face the aesthetic consumption of the countryside and reconcile it with the moral narrative used to justify most calls to action. This is not to question the sincerity of interest in the countryside, and its sustainability, but rather to point out a barrier to real sustainability that may be inherent in the relationship with the landscape of those most interested in it.

This point has not been overlooked by at least some of the residents with whom I spoke. Although only a few of them explicitly indicated that they would like to be more involved in the processes which created the qualities they described as important to their experience of the countryside, more spoke about the problem using language that spoke of being stuck within the problem, rather than looking at it from the outside, or demonstrated their desire to be more entwined with nature by such actions as mowing the forest for the deer. The former tended to be those who wished they could be more involved in farming: "I wanted to move to a farm, but I met extreme opposition [nodding to his wife, in the kitchen beyond the door]; this was as close as I could get" (49). A good example of the latter was a woman who had moved into Caledon Mountain Estates when it was being built, and who
discussed the loss of ruralness with a sense of helplessness. By moving into a residential subdivision, she felt that she had been part of the erosion of the rural reality of her community, but she also felt morally unable to protest such action, since she herself had been part of it (75). She wanted the rural back, but knew that she wanted it as an outsider, that her desire was to consume ruralness and not to participate in it. This woman described the activities of some community members who were working to rebuild what she called the “community rural” feel of the area. By reaching out to residents and newcomers with a reminder of why they enjoyed life in the countryside, or why they had moved there in the first place, these individuals were trying to raise the level of commitment of their neighbours to a sustainable countryside, and to raise their awareness of the small ways they could participate in the long-term goals of the community.

Making common cultural stories about the countryside (and the allure of living there) explicit could help residents think about their own expectations, reducing the likelihood that residents will expect the impossible of the countryside itself (self-actualization, perfect children, a better marriage) (Jobes 2000), and potentially increasing the ability of the resident to realize their expectations by participating in some of the processes that really do take place in the countryside (Donahue 1999). One goal would be to encourage and assist existing cultural narratives of engagement with the landscape and the sustainability of the residential countryside (Gertler 1994). Although discussion of development of the urban field is often cast in the negative terminology of the “urban shadow,” there have also been many successful models of country residence. Many communities have developed mechanisms for involving more citizens in the concrete realization of the long-term, more abstract goals involved in achieving sustainability, and communities wishing to address these goals could make an
effort to identify, support and promote these mechanisms. Projects such as Land’s Sake, the
community farm described in Chapter 2, combine the support of a municipal entity (in this
case through the use of public land) with the support of its citizens (who grow and buy the
produce) to increase the amount and visibility of sustainable land use. By focusing on
education and ecology, these projects make residents more aware of the reasons they enjoy
their home places and more able to participate in them. By combining focus on the local
landscape with the production of food, Land’s Sake is able to offer basic relevance to its
neighbours: a nice place to live, good food to eat. Although these simple pleasures represent
an extensive political agenda for many of the people involved, these symbols are accessible
at many levels – although there are a number of ways to become involved, they span a wide
continuum of effort required. Buying vegetables from the farm, or supporting it in more
intensive ways through volunteering, or just enjoying it on the way by, if done with
awareness of the story it represents, is an act of affirming the local community and helps
residents gain some sense of increased connection to and knowledge of the land, and thus of
its future. These opportunities to do something related to the land and the community are
intimately related to narratives of living in the countryside.

The ways in which increased awareness of the landscape and its future can spread into
other aspects of daily life make this point of entry an obvious target for a wide range of
individuals and groups interested in the question of sustainability. With fuller understanding
of the processes with which one is intimately involved, it becomes easier to see the many
levels of connections between self and world in the domain of daily action. If daily actions
reify a commitment to sustainability, the abstract nature of long-term goals in concretized and
made more immediately gratifying through the achievement of these commonplace
interactions with the story which incorporates a successful future. For this reason, small but often repeated actions should be the target for change, but it is important to note that the success in changing these small actions lies as much with the explanation as with the action itself. In order to change such a fundamental aspect of our culture as awareness of the future as well as the present, each step toward sustainability must be viewed as a step, connected to many others, rather than an end in itself. Like the stories described in Chapter 5 about learning to live in the country, the provision of these structures for behavior thus helps to teach willing participants how to successfully live in the landscape they find desirable, and helps keep that landscape desirable, both in an amenity context, as a good place to live, but also in a functional context.

The function of the residential countryside for agriculture and the production of natural resources has been eclipsed by residential and amenity functions. The aesthetic of the countryside, defended as a concrete ideal with good examples such as self-reliance (cutting firewood, clearing the driveway of snow), is in some ways an imagined participation in an ideal rural landscape. This rural idyll is very dear in our culture, and as more people are able to create a place for themselves in the residential countryside, exurban narratives and aesthetics will be bolstered by the added layers of participation and experience (Harrison 1992). The rapid growth of development espousing the exurban aesthetic has created a more pressing need to understand the underlying stories of this aesthetic and especially their implications for the future. How sustainable are our stories about living in the countryside?

In 1916, Professor Warren was able to predict that they were not very sustainable. The family that set out to make its living from the land with $500 was almost bound to fail. Today, a family is much better able to subsidize rural experience with the economic help of
accessible urban areas and food and manufactured goods imported from places with less capacity to defend, protect, and conserve the countryside. But both optimistic and pessimistic views of the future call into question the sustainability of the residential countryside. Pessimism predicts the end of cheap energy and the need to produce food and natural resources closer to the places where they are consumed. Optimism predicts continued rises in the standard of living and a consequent rise on the dominance hierarchy of those less developed countries whose landscapes more developed countries plunder to preserve their own countrysides. In any future, the demands of sustainability require that we account for our uses of the land without unnoticed externalization of the costs either of production or of consumption.

**Conclusion**

Exurbia provides a distinct opportunity for engagement with the landscape, both in its physical environment (larger property, existing variety, woodlands) and its sociocultural environment (rural ideology, exurban aesthetic). Something that could enhance this opportunity is an accessible functional narrative for the residential countryside, one that tells residents "How to live here." Fragments of such narratives exist; we should consider how these can be strengthened. What residents of the countryside are doing with their land, at least in part, is creating a space for themselves, part refuge from the city and part something else – although this something else doesn’t seem to be well elaborated. The results of my survey questionnaire (presented on page 108) indicate a temporal trend in the phenomenon of engagement with the local landscape. As might be expected, longer term residents are most highly engaged, but newly arrived residents are also strongly interested in the local
landscape. This interest and commitment seems to drop off after the first year, however, potentially indicating that the enthusiasm for the potential of the countryside implicated in the move was not realized in actual engagement, and that involvement in local issues of community and ecological sustainability rises again only after long residence in the place. This finding supports the suggestion that increasing bridging between established activities in the landscape and newly arrived exurbanites could improve the ability of more residents of the countryside to be actively involved in its processes, and better enabled to achieve a sustainable future.

**Future research**

During the course of this project, I encountered several additional sources of insight and information about land use in the residential countryside. Examination of these sources, such as the Credit Valley Conservation Authority studies of forest cover in Caledon, and more focused interviews with interested property owners contacted through this project, would be likely next steps in building upon the findings contained in this thesis. In the context of the Credit Valley Conservation studies, closer examination of the vegetative data collected in this project would be more meaningful and useful, and could potentially lead to insights about why residents make land use choices such as reforestation projects.

A more focused participant selection process for interviewing (such as snowballing, or asking previous contacts to suggest new contacts) would allow for a more direct inquiry into the motivations and influences involved in the experience of countryside narratives, although it would not provide the same insight into the experience of those who have not given their experience of the countryside much thought. The randomness of my sampling technique was valuable for the variety of responses encountered, but real randomness cannot
be achieved in this type of geographical study because residents have already selected themselves into a particular landscape. Along with a more focused interview format, a larger sample will allow for the application of established psychological frameworks which could assist in gaining a better understanding of the implicit relationship with landscape, and influences and motivations for landscape-related behaviour.
References:


Appendix A: Questions for Landscape Interpretation

Contents:
Jackson, J. B.: Discovering the Vernacular Landscape
Meinig, D. W.: The Beholding Eye, Symbolic Landscapes
Lewis, P. F.: Axioms for reading the landscape
Clay, G.: Close-Up
Relph, E.: Place and Placelessness

Jackson, J. B.: Discovering the Vernacular Landscape (1984)

Who owns this space?
Who uses this space?
How was it formed?
How does it change?

Landscape as language: balance (conflict & compromise) between authority landscape and vernacular

Authority (look for):
goals, structure, law
growth, preservation, beauty
premeditation, planning, permanence
politics, unity, order
boundaries, monuments, enclosed space
arbitrary decisions of power
rights, autonomy, identity defined by possessions
clear and permanent definition (homogeneous use)
divisions: public/private, rich/poor, work/play, city/country, forest/field
self-contained, shapely, beautiful
political, intellectual, artistic
contemplation of nature, static conservative social order
sanctity of place - space makes us visible through engagement

Vernacular (look for):
ephemera, mobility, change
small scale, irregular shape, subject to rapid change (use, ownership, dimensions)
common land: waste, pasture, forest
piecemeal (brief) resources, unmaintained roads, scattered settlement
abandonment, signs of renewal, unending, patient adjustment to circumstances
blind loyalty to local ways, devotion to common customs, ingenuity in short-term solutions
tradition, custom, identity defined by membership in group, community
mixed use, patchwork border, intermingled territories
adaptability, preference for the transitory, vitality
priority of social networks - village, frontier

landscape as:
1. nature
   Is there a temptation to remove human works from the scene, and to restore pristine nature?
   How are the beauty and power of nature represented?
2. habitat
   How are the adaptations of humans and the adjustment of the environment balanced to create
   human habitat?
3. artifact
   How have the inhabitants conquered or remolded nature to suit their desires?
4. system
   How does the surface evidence reveal the underlying [abstract] processes?
5. problem
   How does this landscape need to be fixed or remediated?
6. wealth
   What aspects of this landscape have market value?
   How do public services and other proximate landscapes affect value?
7. ideology
   What are the values, governing ideas, and underlying philosophies of this landscape?
8. history
   What is the chronological record of what has happened here? Look for accumulation of
   imprints.
   (9. Place)
10. aesthetic
   What is the essence of the landscape, in the language of art?

Have other landscapes obscured and effaced the ones that generated the symbols here?
What does it say about the way of life, about what should go on here?

Meinig: Symbolic Landscapes (1979)

1. How representative of the symbolic place is this place?
2. How do actual landscapes become symbolic landscapes?
   What does this landscape have in common with the symbolic landscape?
3. How can we assess the impact, the power, of the symbol?
   How is substance shaped by the symbol?
4. How do we define and assess the significance of the difference between the ideal and the
   real?

Lewis, P. F.: Axioms for reading the landscape (1979)

1. Landscape as a clue to culture
corollaries: cultural change, regional, convergence, diffusion, taste
2. Cultural unity and landscape equality
caveats: really unique item, patterns of unique things, difficulty of study and understanding
   common things
3. Common things
nonacademic literature
4. Historic
   historic lumpiness, mechanical or technological
5. Geographic or ecologic
6. Environmental Control
7. Landscape obscurity


Are changes visible? Old things missing or new things added? Has the place changed gracefully over time?
Look for:
1. Sequences, successions, climaxes, patterns, relationships
   “Fixed” perspectives: Where are the focal points, the places to stand?
   Attempts to create views, or pictures, in which no answers are needed.
   Indicators of scale, places or evidence or potentials of movement
   Avenues of information sharing - places of social networks
   Dangerous movement zones, danger?
   Epitome districts: where one may observe formal and informal rituals, symbolic activities
2. Agency
   Is this a place where individuals have created a mosaic, or where towns, developers have created the matrix?
   Does it show a reliance on experts or expression of the inhabitants use and imagination?
3. Identity
   How does the place exhibit or create identity?
   Street names, local mythology of place? Place-related festivals?
   Gatekeepers or symbolic entrances? Signs, symbols?
   (how much self-defining does a town do? does it have a powerful tourism centre, pamphlets, historical societies, etc.?)
   How do places [try to] select their populations groups?
   How are people encouraged or kept out?
   How is territory defined, fenced?
   Hardening, rules, zoning, controlled movement?
   How is the differentiation made between who is welcome and who is not?
   How is occupation made visible?
   Are conflicting values expressed (especially those which conflict with neighbors)?
   Look for swarming - how important is it to being here that other people came here first?
   Is a desire to “be the last corners” present? (exclusion)
   Look for suburbs as frontier, escape
   What selfhood does the landscape reinforce? reassembled historical identity? Local?
Regional?
   Distinguish between manufactured identity and what is really going on.
   Does it show a desire to return to an imagined historic simplicity?
4. Nature and consumption
   Power of local nature, especially water: has this place been built in harmony or accordance with the potentials of this power? Flood lines, etc?
   Environmental impact, degradation; fragmentation, ecological insight
   What does the landscape say about consumption?
Natural resource exploitation or protection?
How important is mobility to being here?
Convenience?
Priority of automobile use?
Does the place exhibit attitudes of plenty, exploitation of resources?
Does it exhibit efforts to try to live sparingly?

5. Meaning
What kind of meaning does a landscape hold for someone?
How has meaning become layered, "built up over time, and seldom flow to us all at once; it is the repeated coming back to a scene or place, perhaps over a lifetime, which adds to the layers of experience that we share with an environment."

Always ask: why is it like this? How did it become? What will it become?
Does it show a realistic appraisal of the present situation?
Does it show any thought about facing the future squarely?

Relph, E.: Place and Placelessness (1976)

What are the physical or symbolic qualities of placeness (imageability, landmark, central points or focuses)?
Do they display centres of power, meaning?
Are there components which display individual engagement in the place?
Alternately are there meaningful landmark-like pieces of ‘place making’ that demean individual involvement? (professionally maintained landscaping)
Public vs. private space:
Are there areas to be used only by the owner?
Are there efforts made for privacy?
Are aspects of “public” (created and known through common experiences and involvement in common symbols and meanings) space present?
Are there notable differences between private and public areas of the property?
Do aspects of the place evoke common cultural experiences or meanings to be experienced by the owner/passby?
By their reflective character, do they encourage personal, unique experience of the place (deep/meditative) or do they, by their common association, evoke a culturally constructed experience of place (shallow/calculative)?
Does the place show elements of time?
Does the place reflect the time of day or time of year?
Does the place exhibit an abrupt creation of place or a slowly grown creation of place?
Is there evidence of concern or care (rootedness) for the place?
Is there evidence of participation in the life of the community?
(which preserves in living shape certain particular expectations for the future)
Is there evidence of the Dialectical experience of nostalgia of uprootedness vs. melancholia of oppression and imprisonment in a place?
Appendix B: INSTRUMENTS

Contents:
1. Telephone Script
2. Interview Form
3. Property Landscape Treatment Form
4. Landscape Usership Survey

Bold items are statements retained in the final Engagement with the Local Landscape scale
Italicized items are from the self-deceptive enhancement scale.

1. Telephone Script

Hello, is this [address of property]?

My name is Valentine Cadieux; I'm a student at the University of Toronto. I'm studying change in the landscape in Ontario, and your property is part of a study area that I'm working on in [study area]. Would you have a half hour or so when it would be possible for me to come over to talk with you about your property, and possibly to look at your property to record the vegetation growth?

[arrange date and time; confirm location]
2. Interview Form

address: ___________________________ date: ___________________________

Can you tell me how you use your property and what you’ve done with it?

What was the property like when you moved in here? Do you have any old photographs of it?

Why did you choose to move here?

Can you tell me what you have planted on the property, and why? What have you changed, and why?

What do you plan to do with the property, and why? Do you have an image of what you want your property to be like in 20 years?

Do you manage your woodlot? (if appropriate)

How much was the rural landscape a factor in deciding to move here? (Do you consider this "rural"?)

Has your experience lived up to your expectations, and how? Are you satisfied with your property?

Are there any places that you’ve seen or experienced that are good examples of the way you’d like your property/this area to be?

How have these places (or others) influenced you in what you’ve done with your property? (Anything else? Art, stories, movies, TV)

Can you tell me about what it is that you hope to get out of this landscape? What kind of feeling do you want to get from your property?

Have you noticed an overall change in the natural environment since you moved here? How do you feel about it?

How do you feel about changes occurring in this area? If no change, will people have to do anything to keep it the way it is? If so, what?

How does what you do with your property fit in with how you’d like the surrounding area to be in the future?

Are there other places that are important to you? (examples might be a vacation or camping spot, a cottage, a farm, a community garden, a particular forest) What do you do there? How do you feel there? How does that affect what you do with this property?

What are the most ideal places that you know of?
### 3. Property Landscape Treatment Form

**Address:**

- Lot Size: 1<2 acres, 22-3.9, 34-6.9, 47-14.9, 515-29.9, 630-49.9, 750-99.9, 8100 plus
- Lot Type: Intact, Severed Remnant, Severance, Pre-war Subdivision, Estate Subdivision, Village Lot

**Date:**

- Set Back: 1On road, 2Close to Road, 3Set back up to 30 yards, 430-60 yards, 560 plus yards
- Relation of house to the road: distance, interval, 1lawn, 2 forest, 3 lawn/ forest, 4 mixed

*Proportion between house size and lot size. /

*House Type: 2


**Building Material:** Brick, Stone, Natural Wood, Painted Wood, Log, Alum., Breeze Block

**Colour:** Brick, Yellow, Cedar Red, White, Natural, Grey, Other

**Condition of building:** Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor

**Condition of property:** natural, impeccable, kept by landscaper, well-kept, neat, fair, neglected

**Driveway:** path to drive, path to road, other paths

**no garage, 1 bay garage, 2 garage, 3 garage, [4] (parking place, drive loop)

**Sheds, outbuildings, 198.stables, animals, pens, runs, houses, 199.birdfeeders and houses, saltlicks**

**View:** 0 none 1Road, 2Limited Panorama, 3Long Distance, 200.1Enclosed Back Lot, 2Enclosed Front Lot 3 both

**Topographic Relationship:** Normal, 1Depression, 2Hillside Set-In, 3Hillside, 4Rise, 5Edge, 6Knoll

**Pond:** None, Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, Lake, 499 6 for 178River/Stream, 180 wetland

*Ornamentation: None, Wagonwheels, Statuettes, Negro-Boys, Jockeys, Flags, Colonial,

**Enclosures, arbors, arches, fences? Is the property enclosed? enclosure (describe)**

**Trees:** None, [202(EN) 1 Saplings,] [203 1 Mature Deciduous], [204 Popples,] [205 Regrowth (including sumac),] [206(ER)Blue Spruce,] [207(1Hedges, 2 Maple line (hedgerow)] [208 Evergreen lines, Windbreaks, Screens,] [209 Plantation,] [210(Original Wood, Original wood at rear,] [211(1Lilacs, Willows, (fruit), Orchard,] [2032(2Bush, 3Scrub, 4Complex total, 5Evergreen (complete), 6 Norway maple, ck] [212(2EX) 1 Shrubs 2 Dwarf-evergreen ]

*How many trees (what kind of tree density) are there?*

**Bushes, 183 foundation plantings, 184 topiary, 185 other vegetation**

**Vegetable Garden, 187 flowerbeds, 188 crops**

**Impact on land:** None, Minor, Average, High, Desecration

**Location on road:** Concession, Sideroad, Estate Road, Cul-de-Sac, Other

**Road type:** 4-lane paved, 2-lane improved/paved, 2-lane paved, Gravel-improved, Gravel

**Golf, 193. Swimming Pool, 194. Tennis Court, 195. Horses, Equine Paraphernalia: Jumps, Track, Paddocks, All**

**Recreational equipment? (swingsets, tire, tree swings, hammocks, temporary games)**

*Lawn ornaments and other statuary / *Balconies, windows, lanterns, doors

**123 (outdoor room) Porches, verandas, Patios, decks, terraces and gravel pads, Lawn chairs and yard furniture, 214 Barbeques**

*Is exterior space oriented toward temporary or permanent domestic uses?*

**Abutments:** streams, woods, fields, commercial, residential, golf courses

Proportion of lot's area occupied by dominant land use types
4. Land Use/ship Survey

Current residence location: Farm, non-farm, village (50-999), town (1000-9999), urban (10,000-100,000), Large city (100,000+) (circle one)
Length of residence: <1 yr, 1<2 yrs, 2<5 yrs, 5<10 yrs, 10<15 yrs, 15<20, 20+
Prior community type: Rural farm, Rural non farm, Rural village, Rural town, urban (10,000-100,000), Large city (100,000+)
Childhood community type: Rural farm, Rural non farm, Rural village, Rural town, urban (10,000-100,000), Large city (100,000+)

The following statements are related to attitudes and beliefs and the way they interact with where people live. Read each statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with it. There are no right or wrong answers, please be as honest and accurate as you can.

Please circle one category for each statement: Strongly Agree—Agree—Neutral—Disagree—Strongly Disagree

The people in this area are really involved in what goes on here.
The area needs to develop its economic potential more.
People who don’t know the area very well have more of a say over what goes on here than they should.

Environmental sustainability is an important factor in my everyday decisions.
I would like to see more farms being protected in this area.
I probably wouldn’t live here if it weren’t convenient or necessary for my job. (R)
I would like to be more involved in the local community.
I always know why I like things. (R)
The natural environment is not essential to my enjoyment of this place.
This area has too much development already and should limit growth.
Privacy is a very important part of the appeal of my present residence.
I do most of my shopping locally.
I find that I have to do much of my shopping elsewhere, because the services I need just aren’t here. (R)
Things would be better here if there were more jobs for young people.
I am very conscious of the effects of what I do around my house & property on nature.
The sense of tradition in this area is very important to my happiness here.
Communities of this size across Canada are really more similar to each other than different.
I recycle as many things as I can.
This place has a unique identity.
I would be likely to move if this area changed significantly. (R)
I participate in activities that are a real part of the feel of this place.
I sometimes lose out on things because I can’t make up my mind soon enough. (R)
The long-term stability of the community is an important factor in my choice to live here.
I regularly participate in local and municipal government.
I would miss the resources of the city if I didn’t have access to them.
I strive to be self-sufficient.

It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me.

Many decisions about what can be done with the land here are made by government agencies who don't really know what the situation is like.

A farm is the ideal place to raise a family.

Summer people are an important part of the dynamic of this area.

Engagement in the local community is an important part of life in a place like this.

The character of this area has changed since I moved here.

My life would be pretty much the same if I lived somewhere else.

This area will be likely to keep its rural character, even if places near here become increasingly suburbanized.

I don't spend much time outside.

I have a hard time thinking of any place I would rather live than here.

I don't always know the reasons why I do the things I do.(R)

The world is changing too quickly.

I am quite involved in this community.

I sometimes feel that this is a haven of rural tradition.

I sometimes read stories about places like this one.

Stories I read or heard when I was growing up portrayed places that were a lot like this one in my imagination.

I often wish for or need things that can be found only in the city. (R)

I identify strongly with the character of my area or region.

My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.

I can identify at least a few local plants, animals and trees.

I appreciate the conservation land here in my area and nearby.

This area has enough low income housing.

I am very confident of my judgments.

I would want my children to grow up in this area.

I appreciate the convenience of easy access to the city from here.

I find stories about old Ontario farmers or people who go back to the land to be compelling.

I feel very safe in this area.

I appreciate the simplicity of life out of the city.

When I moved, I was sure that I would be happy living here.

I try to maintain the ecological integrity of my property.

I enjoy art that depicts landscape.