DIALOGIC LANDSCAPE:

RECIPROCITY BETWEEN A CAMPUS GARDEN

AND A UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Sustainable Communities

Northern Arizona University

May 2014

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Abstract

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This thesis concerns the relationship between community and landscape or people and place. This relationship is of critical importance because its outcomes are always located, affecting human communities, broader ecological communities and the landscape itself. Specifically, this thesis presents the variety of ways that the NAU (Northern Arizona University) community understands and engages with the SSLUG (Students for Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening) Garden. To assess the reciprocity of this relationship, this thesis frames understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden as a conversational or dialogic process. Interviews conducted in and participant-produced illustrations of the SSLUG Garden suggest that participants’ relationships with the SSLUG Garden are contingent on individual and collective sociocultural positions. However, this inquiry also produced results that suggest that this sociocultural contingency dissipates during immediate local and specific experiences in the SSLUG Garden, thereby promoting more reciprocal dialogue with landscape.

Keywords: landscape, dialogue, reciprocity, place, space
Acknowledgements

For my kith and kin. I am forever indebted to all our shared dialogues with and in landscapes, especially on Ash Creek Road.

I wish to thank my Chair, Dr. Nora Timmerman and my committee members, Dr. Janine Schipper and Dr. Jason Matteson for their guidance and support.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the participants of this research. I enjoyed our walks through the SSLUG Garden.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Location. Where are you? In what ways do you affect (and are you affected by) your present landscape?

The process of landscape. Landscape is socioculturally constructed. Landscape is immediately experienced. Landscape is a process (Hirsch, 1995) held in tension between sociocultural construction and immediate experience. This thesis, instead of asking “what landscape ‘is’” asks how it “emerges and happens” (Crouch, 2012, p. 105). It asks: In what ways do communities understand and engage landscape(s)? Specifically, I ask this question of the relationship between the Northern Arizona University (NAU) community and the Students for Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening (SSLUG) Garden: In what ways does the NAU community understand and engage the SSLUG Garden? In addition, I consider how the landscape might be conceived of as a dialogic process between community and landscape.

The present work is meant to respond broadly to my own curiosities and concerns about the relationships between community and landscape. Specifically, attending to the tension between sociocultural construction and immediate experience of landscape is an invitation to look beyond (below, beside, within) and call into question the everyday organization and use of landscapes (parks, gardens, private property, resource extraction), while observing how immediate experiences and sociocultural construction may inform one another. A critical gaze upon the relationship between community and landscape is essential to the process of sustainable communities. Our
understanding of and engagement with landscape produces outcomes that are located in and affect both human and broader ecological communities. As such, Edward Soja suggests in *Seeking Spatial Justice* that since we construct our multiscalar geographies, or they are constructed for us by more powerful others, it follows that we can act to change or reconfigure them to increase the positive or decrease the negative effects. These efforts to make changes in our existing spatial configurations, whether they involve redecorating our homes, fighting against racial segregation in our cities, creating policies to reduce income inequalities between the developed and developing countries, or combating global warming do not express innocent or universally held objectives. They are the target and source of conflicting purposes, competing forces, and contentious political actions for and against the status quo. Space is not an empty void. It is always filled with politics, ideology, and other forces shaping our lives and challenging us to engage in struggles over geography. (2010, p. 38)

I begin this chapter by describing the landscape process in Harrison County, Ohio through a personal narrative to help situate my perspective of the landscape process and to establish its topical relevance. I then conclude this chapter by describing the SSLUG Garden and outlining the chapters of this thesis.

**Outcomes are located.** The following narrative demonstrates how outcomes of the landscape process are located and is meant to illuminate my connection to and the social relevance of this topic. Hydraulic fracturing is widespread in Harrison County, Ohio. From beneath the farm fields and forests, Chesapeake Oil, among others, has begun fracturing shale and extracting natural gas. For this access, many residents of Harrison County have agreed to lease or sell their mineral resource rights. Understanding and engagement of the Harrison County landscape has already changed. In the following narrative, I imagine the ways in which this change in understanding and engagement will affect the landscape and “those who dwell there” (Spiri, 1998, p. 17).
Harrison County, Ohio. This is a patient land. Underneath its surface locked, probably for good reason, into rock, is natural gas. Driving north into the next county you meander through dilapidated farmsteads in the course of Amish renewal and move deeper into the topography of a new natural resource economy.

The new economy is a hurried thing. Drillin’ rigs spit and sputter and cough and choke until the task is done – until the cut is deep and precise, until the earth begins to weep its coveted commodity. The lights of the drilling equipment burn bright against the evening sky, peeking above the crowns of the maple-oak forest, like the star atop a Christmas tree. The seeker seeks treasure without pause.

Hydraulic fracturing has dug deep into the biological richness of patience. Soon the fuel that our preposterous energy appetites demand will be taken and gone from underneath these lands; the (dollar) prosperity of this exploitation will be just as fleeting. And who, with money in hand, wants to live in a wasteland anyhow?

This landscape process in Harrison County has become, by and large, exploitative of landscape. The land is now understood and engaged almost exclusively as a commodity, “an inert fact to be taken for granted” (Berry, 1970, p. 72). Believing the affect of and our affect to landscape to be inert is perilous to landscape and community. By this thought, the Harrison County landscape has been desecrated. By this thought, we enable our desecration of landscapes (both urban and rural) and those who dwell there. Ultimately, “there are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated
places” (Berry, 2005, p. 18). With these words, Wendell Berry denies that outcomes of the landscape process are inherent; rather, the belief that land is a commodity and/or inert is inculcated. Thus, the outcomes of this belief are socioculturally produced and justified. Landscape, in other words, is “not given but made and remade; it is an inheritance that demands to be recovered, cultivated and projected toward new ends” (Corner, 1999, p. 12).

**The present work.** The outcomes of the landscape process in Harrison County, Ohio (and elsewhere) have motivated me to inquire into the process by which other communities understand and engage landscapes. This thesis specifically concerns the landscape process between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden.

**The SSLUG Garden.** The SSLUG Garden is a community garden located on NAU’s Flagstaff Campus. Students of NAU’s MA Sustainable Communities program founded the garden in 2008. The SSLUG (Students for Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening) Action Research Team, the Campus Organic Gardener, and community and university volunteers maintain the SSLUG Garden. I chose the SSLUG Garden for this inquiry because students, faculty, staff, and community actively maintain (engage) it. Additionally, having many classes and meetings nearby during my time as a student of the MA Sustainable Communities program, I began to notice that pedestrians engaged differently with the SSLUG Garden than they did with other parts of campus. I was curious about this difference and so chose to locate my inquiry of landscape between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden.

**Theory and literature review.** I interpret understanding of and
engagement with landscape to exist between a sociocultural construction and immediate experiences of landscape. The sociocultural construction of landscape is a *general idea* that frames “everyday” (Hirsch, 1995, p. 4) landscape understanding and engagement within a particular society, culture, and time. On the other hand, the immediate experiences of landscape concern *specific and local* landscape situations. I support this interpretation with literature and research from the disciplines of landscape theory, cultural anthropology and others.

The second theoretical aspect of this research involves framing the relationship between community and landscape as dialogic. In this framing, I describe dialogue as resolving the tension between a sociocultural construction and immediate experiences of landscape. More specifically, I use dialogue as a critical lens to evaluate the reciprocity between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden. To develop this dialogic framing, I primarily employ Martin Buber’s (1937) distinction between “I-It” and “I-Thou” communication.

**Methods and questions.** Because the outcomes of the landscape process are always located, it is necessary to examine, as Soja (2010) incites, the processes that produces these outcomes. While a variety of research has focused on the landscape process, only a few frame this process as dialogic. Furthermore, I did not find research that concerned the landscape process between campus gardens and university communities. The guiding questions of this research are:

1. In what ways does the NAU community understand and engage
the SSLUG Garden?

2. How can the conceptualization of the landscape process as dialogic be employed in evaluating the reciprocity between community and landscape?

To explore these questions, I collected three types of qualitative data from 13 NAU community members (students, staff, and faculty). I asked that each research participant illustrate the SSLUG Garden, conducted on-site (in the SSLUG Garden) interviews and facilitated an on-site focus group.

**Results and conclusion.** These methods revealed a variety of understandings of and engagements with the SSLUG Garden. Approaching this data through grounded theory/situation analysis, I arrived at themes of understanding and engagement that helped to describe the landscape process between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden. In my concluding chapter, I use these themes to conceptualize this particular landscape process. Additionally, I frame participant understanding and engagement as dialogic to explore the reciprocity between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden. In particular, I draw connections between the results of this inquiry and the theory and research that I outline in Chapter 2. Finally, I offer recommendations for improving the reciprocity between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden and landscapes generally.

**Purpose and significance.** The purpose of this thesis is to explore the ways in which the NAU community understands and engages with the SSLUG Garden. This specific inquiry is meant to serve as a model for future inquiries into the landscape process. I pursued this inquiry in order to develop
a sensitivity to or a “fluency” (Spirn, 1998) of the landscape process. I am hopeful that this fluency will enable me to facilitate more reciprocal relationships between community and landscape. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations of this thesis suggest potential means for enriching the reciprocity between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden.

**Organization of the present work.** In the next chapter, I provide a theoretical framework for this inquiry. Into this theoretical framework, I incorporate a review of literature. Next, I present my methodology and methods. The final two chapters present the results of this inquiry and, in conclusion, a discussion of these results and my recommendations.
Chapter 2. Theory and Literature Review

This chapter situates the question of how communities understand and engage with landscapes within a range of topical theory and research. The process of landscape is held in tension between a sociocultural construction and immediate experiences of landscape. This chapter discusses this process in three parts. The first section of this chapter discusses the sociocultural construction of landscape. The next section discusses the immediate experiences of landscape. Finally, this chapter concludes by exploring a dialogic framing of the landscape process.

While this chapter is organized into three sections, the boundaries are less clear, even nonexistent, in lived relationships between community and landscape. This particular organization is meant only to offer a fleeting legibility to the landscape process.

Landscape is Socioculturally Constructed

Viewing landscapes and the understandings of and engagements with landscapes as socioculturally constructed is an opening to consider the construction (by whom and for whom) or representation of everyday experiences in landscape. Below, I provide an overview of theory and research that describe the sociocultural construction of landscape.

**Contextualized landscapes.** The sociocultural construction of landscape situates (even guides) everyday experience. In other words, the sociocultural constructedness of landscape communicates socioculturally normative or “everyday” understandings of and engagements with landscape. When experiences fall outside this everyday or do not abide by a particular
landscape’s “program” (Tschumi, 1996) they are deviant or, as Hou offers, are “insurgent” (2010). Examples include loitering, trespassing, graffiti, flash mobs, guerrilla urbanism and gardening etc.

For example, the everyday urban American landscape generally criminalizes trespassing, graffiti and panhandling. On the other hand, in the everyday rural American landscape, resource (fossil fuel, forestry, soil etc) exploitation is permitted (e.g., Harrison County). In neither the urban landscape nor the rural landscape are any of these rules or allowances inherent. They are overlaid as a program (Tschumi, 1996) or socioculturally constructed to guide the understanding and engagement of people in a given landscape. Vincenzo Guarrasi describes this relationship:

Upon a world of ‘natural’ phenomenon [...] we inscribe an artificial ‘order,’ that of ‘culture’ as a signifying system within which every material object is associated with a mental representation; every signifier with a corresponding signified. All manifestations of human spatiality are thus both material and mental objects – they are signs. And if we hold the above to be true, then space and culture become indistinguishable. (2001, p. 226)

It is for this reason that Barbara Bender begins Landscape: Politics and Perspectives by stating that “[l]andscape has to be contextualized” (Bender, 1993, p. 2). Bender continues that “[t]he way in which people - anywhere, everywhere - understand and engage with their worlds will depend upon the specific time and place and historical conditions” (p. 2). The specific time and place and historical conditions, in other words, build a framework or sociocultural landscape in which the everyday experience of landscape operates. A 2013 study in the Journal of Ecological Anthropology describes how landscape perception differs among residents of France, England, Germany and Hungary. The author, Dóra Drexler, discovered that the
“historical expressions of landscape in the four countries symbolized and legitimized very different social ideals” (2013, p. 90). She attributes these differences to each countries’ particular cultural-historic maturation. Even within a single society, landscape experience is stratified according to levels of engagement and empowerment (Bender, 1993, p. 2). For example, Roberta Marzorati’s (2013) place-based ethnography illuminates how Italian residents, mostly through discursive strategies, contest the use of public spaces by immigrant populations. Marzorati found that “[e]stablished residents tend to frame the presence of immigrants – public space users, shopkeepers and residents – as a threat […],” (p. 266) and “the cause of degradation and insecurity. As a consequence, these people [immigrants] are excluded from enjoying the use of certain public spaces […]” (p. 267). These contestations express a cultural stratification through which immigrant populations are pressured to understand and engage public space by and differently than their Italian neighbors.

**General.** The socioculturally constructed landscape is a representation of a variety of relationships and can, therefore, only be general. Berry (1997) believes that while “[o]rganizations tend to move toward single objectives – a ruling, a vote, a law – and they find it relatively simple to cohere under acronyms and slogans” a reciprocal relationship with landscape or “kindly use is a concept that of necessity broadens, becoming more complex and diverse as it approaches action.” Berry continues that land is too various in its kinds, climates, conditions, declivities, aspects, and histories to conform to any generalized understanding or to prosper under generalized treatment. The use of land cannot be both general and kindly – just as the forms of good manners, generally applied (applied, that is, without consideration of
differences), are experienced as indifference, bad manners. [...] Kindly use depends upon intimate knowledge, the most sensitive responsiveness and responsibility. As knowledge (hence, use) is generalized, essential values are destroyed. (1997, p. 31)

The generalization of landscape permits a comprehensive and coherent “image” and, as a consequence, landscape becomes a “total phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of site” (Norberg-Schulz, 1979, p. 7). This total phenomenon of landscape can be variously constructed and facilitate various relationship between landscape and community.

The sociocultural construction of landscape can be employed for the exploitation of and the expression of power and control over landscape(s) and the community who dwells there. Such is the case in Harrison County, Ohio. For Patrice Jones, an exploitive relationship with landscape follows from alienation. Jones, an ecofeminist writer, scholar, and activist describes “alienation, separation, dissociation” as “the heart of the problem” and that

[to imagine that you “own” a piece of land, you must first alienate yourself from it, psychologically tearing yourself out of the seamless fabric of your ecosystem in order to lay claim to part of it. (2006, p. 322)]

Conversely, when the idea of landscape involves collective knowledges, sentiments, and actions of all who dwell in a landscape, it more likely appreciates the mutuality (physical, social, spiritual) between community and landscape. As Wendell Berry suggests, landscape and community “can be preserved in health only by the forbearance and care of a multitude of persons” (Berry, 1997, p. 26).

Witta, Flanagan and Hagan, for example, in their 2012 study concerning cultural influence on environmental resource management found
that “the people of a region, through local knowledge and information sharing, can assist policy-makers and governmental officials [...] in creating a sustainable environment” (p. 44). This study contrasts management through “local knowledge” and “tradition” with organizational management, which the authors found to be “overly focused on abstract ideology of management” (Witta et al., 2012, p. 41). This study demonstrates how immediate experiences of landscape can inform organizational knowledge and practice.

One way of viewing the landscape is as constituted by a variety of immediate experiences. Ignacio Farías proposes that the city is “assembled” (2010, p. 15) as a consequence of encounters among material (buildings, bodies, weather etc) and immaterial (ideas about the material, eg public v. private). Farías emphasizes that assemblage, and the city it produces, are “emergent” and “multiple” (p. 15). The city (or urban landscape) is, in other words, a process with multiple and simultaneous outcomes. For Farías, these outcomes are not pre-existent in the streets, the buildings, the people, the maps etc. The city is thus not an out-there reality, but is literally made of urban assemblages, through which it can come into being in multiple ways. (p. 15)

His city or urban landscape is “relentlessly [...] assembled at concrete sites, as a multiplicity of processes of becoming, affixing sociotechnical networks, hybrid collectives and alternative topologies” (Farías, 2010, p. 2). These “concrete sites” of assemblage are representative of the immediate landscape.

**The Immediate Landscape**

The immediate experience of landscape concerns local and specific
situations. I use situations to evoke the assemblage (Farias, 2010) of or relationship between the material (buildings, trees) and immaterial (experiences of buildings, trees). In this section, I draw on theory and research to describe the immediate experience of landscape.

**Series of experiences.** Immediate situations of landscape can be viewed materially; they are ‘real’ or ‘concrete’. In the immediacy of these ‘real’ situations, the landscape is understood, not as a durable condition of society and/or culture but, instead, as a fluid series of subjective experiences. Immediate situations of, or “a series of significant places” in, a landscape “create a sense of the environment through micro-geographies of meanings (J. Bergeron et al, 2014, p. 109). These fluid and subjective experiences have been described as affective or poetic (Crouch, 2012; Bachelard, 1994; Bergeron et al, 2014). In his *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard, for example, suggests, “a house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space”(1994, p. 47). Bachelard argues that “form” derives meaning when immediately experienced with the “interior poetic light”:

> Even if the “form” was already well-known, previously discovered, carved from “commonplaces,” before the interior poetic light was turned upon it, it was a mere object for the mind. But the soul comes and inaugurates the form, dwells in it, takes pleasure in it. (p. 47)

Bernard Tschumi’s playful, if severe, *Advertisements for Architecture* (below, Figure 2.1) elaborates Bachelard’s notion that form is inaugurated by immediate experience. In other words, similar to architecture, landscape is “defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by” (Tschumi, 1996, p. 100) its physical form and – I would add – the sociocultural everyday that contains
both actions and forms. In *Architecture of Disjunction*, Tschumi claims that

“[e]vent and space do not merge but affect one another” (1996, p. 130).

Indeed, Wilcock, Brierley, and Howitt, drawing on interview data with Indigenous Canadian and Australian populations, found that the landscape process is “a reciprocity of people and place [...] frames knowledge production” and is ultimately a “unique manifestation of the convergence of biophysical-and-social processes” (2013, pp. 592-3). “We are,” in the opinion of postmodern political geographer Edward Soja “enmeshed in efforts to shape the spaces in which we live while at the same time these established and evolving spaces are shaping our lives in many different ways.” Soja continues that
We are thus inescapably embedded in the geographies around us in much the same way as we are integral actors in social contexts and always involved in one way or another in the making of our individual biographies and collective histories. (2010, p. 90)

Bergeron, Parquette and Poullaouex-Gonidec used a “mobile methodologies paradigm, the so-called go-along method, which consists of conducting on-site and mobile interviews” (2014, p. 108) to draw out the individual biographies and collective histories of residents of a small city in the Montreal, Quebec Metro area. They found that the go-along method “generated bounded and located meanings of the everyday” (Bergeron et al., 2014, p. 120) and illuminated “meanings attached to the experience of places, which, whether personal or shared, constructs a geo-poetics of living” (p. 119). The immediate experience of landscape, which “go-along” interviews recreate, can be thought of as a “‘generative grammar of the legs’ as Bailly puts it, that sidesteps the planners, and the remit of official histories, and creates a city cast in our own image, a micro-history of personal trajectories [...]” (Sheringham, 2010, p. 12).

To evoke a sense of landscape as constructed, not only by organizations or experts, but also through personal trajectories, J.B. Jackson and others use the term vernacular landscape. Jackson goes so far as to suggest that this is always how landscapes have been formed; not only by topography and political decisions but by the indigenous organization and development of spaces[...]. (1984, p. 156)

Jackson continues by describing the variety of “needs of the focal community” for which these spaces are organized and developed: “gainful employment, recreation, social contracts, contracts with natures, contracts with the alien world” (p. 156). In other words, a community’s understanding of and
engagement with landscape is, to some extent, a response to their local experience. Similarly, Edward Soja’s socio-spatial dialectic states,

that social and spatial relationships are dialectically inter-reactive, interdependent; that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent (insofar as we maintain a view of organized space as socially constructed). (1980, p. 211)

In contrast, I propose a critical gaze through a dialogic process. The variety of understanding and engagement that exists between and within societies and cultures in this inter-reactive and interdependent process necessitates thinking about landscape through the pluralistic lens of Bakhtin’s dialogue. “To live” Bakhtin states in Dialogical Imagination, “means to participate in dialogue:”

to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. (1981, p. 293)

The landscape process is not a dialectic synthesis but, rather, a dialogic simultaneity (Foucault, 1986). In other words, it is shortsighted to gather the landscape process into a single dialectic process. As Folch-Serra suggests, a “Bakhtinian conceptual landscape [...] strives [...] at ongoing historical developments that alternately ‘anchor’ and destabilize ‘natural harmony’ of a given region through constant interaction between meanings” (1999, p. 258). Rather, as Marzorati (2013) illuminates by contrasting the Italian and immigrant understandings of and engagements with public space, the landscape process includes (but should not be understood to reduce) a variety of understanding and engagement.
Dialogic Landscape

The process of landscape is characterized by “a sense of the purposefully shaped, the sensual and aesthetic, the embeddedness in culture. [...] the dynamic connection between place and those who dwell there” (Spirn, 1998, p. 17). I propose that this dynamic connection, the process of landscape, be thought of as dialogic as a means of gauging reciprocity between community and landscape. In this thesis, I use dialogue to mean an encounter with landscape through which the landscape's immediate experience and sociocultural construction, both evocative and expressive in their own right, are assimilated. This assimilation informs a response or engagement and is, thus, dialogic. Because dialogue between community and landscape can be variously enacted, I do not believe that dialogue, in and of itself, can make the relationship between landscape and community more reciprocal. Instead, I propose dialogue as a lens for a more critical gaze upon the landscape process. Through this lens, understandings and engagements of landscape are weighted against the reciprocity of dialogue. Framing our critical gaze upon the Harrison County landscape process through dialogue, for example, reveals the relative absence of reciprocity. Dialogue does exist. The community (and experts) identified an economically valuable resource. The community (again, with the help of experts) mobilized or responded by extracting this resource for economic gain. This dialogic response is obviously exploitative of landscape and, therefore, not reciprocal.

The individual’s or community’s understanding of landscape is an ephemeral dialogue held in tension between immediate experience and
sociocultural construction. In this section I discuss Martin Buber’s concepts “I-Thou” and “I-It” as tools for evaluating the reciprocity of this dialogue. An “I-Thou” relationship represents a wholly reciprocal dialogue between community and landscape. Buber suggest that through it “[r]elation is mutual. My Thou affects me, as I affect it” (1937, p. 15). Conversely, an “I-It” relationship concerns “experiencing, which continually reconstitutes the world, and using, which leads the world to its manifold aim, the sustaining, relieving, and equipping of human life” (Buber, 1937, p. 38).

**Landscape as a dialogic process.** Anne Whiston Spirn describes the landscape process (1998, p. 17) using a symphony metaphor and, in so doing, draws together much of what has been discussed above:

> To know landscape poetics is to see, smell, taste, hear, and feel landscape as a *symphony of complex harmonies*. Natural processes establish the base rhythm that is expressed in the initial form of the land, to which *culture*, in turn, *responds* with new and changing themes that *weave an intricate pattern*, punctuated here and there by high points of nature and art. Landscape symphonies *evolve continually* in time, in predictable and unpredictable ways, responding to *process* and to *human purpose*, and, in landscape symphonies, *all dwellers are composers and players*. (1998, p. 22, italics added to emphasize themes discussed above)

Through this metaphor, Spirn illuminates landscape as a complex process that is continually woven through dialogue. Similarly, Holloway and Kneale recognize that framing the landscape process “dialogically stresses the complex processes which make up social spaces, which bind local and global together in different forms in different places” (2000, p.84). de San Eugenio-Vela (2014) and Waage (2010) also entertain a conceptualization of the landscape process as communicative.

This communicative relationship, according to Martin Buber (he uses the word ‘world’ rather than landscape), can express one of man’s “two-fold
attitude[s].” With one attitude to the world, the individual (or community) perceives what exists round about him -- simply things, and beings as things; and what happens round about him -- simply events, and actions as events; things consisting of qualities, events of moment; things entered in the graph of place, events in that of time [...]: he perceives an ordered and detached world. [...] You perceive it, take it to yourself as the “truth,” [...] Only concerning it may you make yourself ‘understood’ with others [...]. (Buber, 1937, pp. 31-32)

With a second attitude

man meets what exists and becomes [...] always simply a single being and each thing simply as being. [...] Nothing is present for him except this one being, but it implicates the whole world. [...] The world which appears to you in this way is unreliable, for it takes on a continually new appearance; you cannot hold it to its word. It has no density, for everything in it penetrates everything else. [...] It is your present; only while you have it do you have the present. (Buber, 1937, p. 33)

Buber’s “two-fold attitude” helps to frame the human relationship to landscape through dialogue. I interpret and extend the former attitude to describe a dialogue with landscape that is not reciprocal. I interpret and extend the latter attitude to describe a dialogue with landscape that is reciprocal. These attitudes, or “communications” as translated by Alexander S. Kohanski (1975, p. 45), describe Buber’s “I-It” (former) and “I-Thou” (latter) dialogue with the world.
Buber's tree. Buber considers a tree to demonstrate these two types of “communication.” As an object or “It” in an “I-It” communication, the tree “remains my object, occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution” (Buber, 1937, p. 7). The relationship between Buber and the tree as an object is mediated through notions of experience and use (Figure 2.2). Conversely, engaging the tree as “I-Thou,” Buber stated “I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is now no longer It. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness” (1937, p. 7). In relation, the tree is a subject as Buber is a subject. As a subject, the tree is

no impression, no play on my imagination, no value depending on my mood; but [...] bodied over against me and has to do with me, as I with it -- only in a different way. / Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of the relation: relation is mutual. (Buber, 1937, p. 8)

In the mutuality of relation, Buber has “[n]o aim, no lust, and no anticipation” (Buber, 1937, p. 11) for the tree. Instead, Buber is captivated and affected by

Figure 2.2: “I-It” and “I-Thou”
the tree (Figure 2.2). Buber’s tree becomes a forest for David Abram who extends this mutuality, recognizing that “to listen to the forest is also, primordially, to feel oneself listened to by the forest, just as to gaze at the surrounding forest is to feel oneself exposed and visible, to feel oneself watched by the forest” (1997, p. 153).

“I-Thou” dialogue with landscape, following Buber and Abram, surely are both engendered by and engender a heightened literacy of landscape (Spirn, 1998, p. 22), which Spirn describes as follows:

Reading and speaking it [the language of landscape] fluently is a way to recognize the dialogues ongoing in a place, to appreciate other speakers’ stories, to distinguish enduring dialogues from ephemeral ones, and to join the conversation. [...] reminds us that nothing stays the same, that catastrophic shifts and cumulative changes shape the present. It permits us to perceive pasts we cannot otherwise experience, to anticipate the possible, to envision, choose, and shape the future. (1998, pp. 25 - 26)

The fluency described here concerns both “I-It” and “I-Thou” relationships. Again, “I-It” relationships necessarily serve our reconstituting and using of landscape(s). On the other hand, “I-Thou” relationships allow for encounters of “the tree itself” (Buber, 1937, p. 8). Abram suggests that through such encounters – “direct sensuous reality, in all its more-than-human mystery” and “regular contact with the tangible ground and sky” – “we learn to orient and to navigate in the multiple dimensions that now claim us” (1997, p. x).

Framing the relationship between community and landscape as dialogic is a way to evaluate the reciprocity of the process of landscape. Buber’s distinction between “I-Thou” and “I-It” communication with the world is especially helpful in this regard. Buber believes that the “will to profit and to be powerful have their natural and proper effect so long as they are linked with, and upheld by, [the] will to enter into relation” (1937, p. 48).
Understanding of and engagement with landscape, in other words, is necessarily two-fold (“I-It” and “I-Thou”) and concerns both relation with landscape and experience and use of landscape (Figure 2.3).

The more fully this understanding and engagement emerges from and returns to mutual relation with landscape the more reciprocal the affect between community and landscape.
Chapter 3. Methods

Below, I describe the methods used for this research. First, I outline a mixed-methods approach to gathering data that utilizes qualitative interviews and visual mapping. Next, I outline my grounded theory and situational approach to analysis. I discuss how these approaches support an inquiry of the ways the NAU community understands and engages with the SSLUG Garden. This section describes the process of research participant selection and the analysis of data from qualitative interviews and visual mapping. To conclude, I discuss my standards of efficacy and validity, including research limitations, knowledge translation, representation and bias.

Methods

To draw out and visualize linkages among understandings and engagements, I collected three sets of qualitative data.

First, I asked research participants to illustrate the SSLUG Garden (see guidelines, Appendix A). Second, I interviewed each research participant in the SSLUG Garden (see interview questions, Appendix A). I conducted these interviews through a “mobile methodologies paradigm, the so-called go-along method, which consists of conducting on-site and mobile interviews” (Bergeron, et al., 2014, p. 108). The choice of on-site/mobile interviews is supported by the findings of a 2012 study contrasting virtual webcam and field-based landscape interpretation. Participants of this research described webcams “as less useful than field trips for understanding human and physical systems” (Kolivras, Luebbering, & Resler, 2012, p. 288). The authors interpret these results to suggest that while, “simply ‘interpreting’ a landscape
can be accomplished in some situations using a webcam, [...] ‘experiencing’ a landscape [...] appears to require the use of all of a person’s senses” (Kolivras et al., 2012, p. 288). Finally I invited research participants to a concluding focus group. I conducted this focus group as a design charette – “a specific type of discussion group” used “to develop a feasible design for a proposed space” (Augustine & Coleman, 2012, p. 110). I then analyzed data collected during each phase of the research – illustration, interview, charette – through a combination of grounded theory and situational analysis.

**Illustration.** Illustrations provided an opportunity for research participants to visually engage and reflect on their relationship to the SSLUG Garden before the interview process. I asked research participants to illustrate the SSLUG Garden before our scheduled interview. I encouraged participants to use whatever materials they wished. If they did not complete an illustration before our interview, I provided them with a sheet of paper and a variety of illustration tools (colored pencils, pens markers) to choose from. During our interview, I asked research participants to describe their illustration. Media-based methods of inquiry, photovoice in particular, seem popular in collecting data concerning place and landscape (Brann-Barrett, 2011; Fernández, et al., 2014; Krug, 2012). In a 2014 study, combining participant narratives with media-based methods of inquiry was found to invite the participant into “deep reflection” (Fernández et al., 2014) about their relationship with landscape. Media-based methods do offer a medium for reflection. However, Henri Lefebvre critiques photoraphy as *découpage* (literally “to cut out”), or a process that removes the photographed from its relational context:
Can images of this kind really be expected to expose errors concerning space? Hardly. Where there is error or illusion, the image is more likely to secrete it and reinforce it than to reveal it. (1991: 96-97)

So while photovoice elicits reflection, it does so by “dismemberment” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 97). The method, photography in general, invites deep and specific reflection but by “cutting out” a piece of a deeply interrelated landscape. Compared to photographs, illustrations permit a wider interpretive and creative frame for participation (Literat, 2013).

**Interview process.** Conducting “go-along” or walking interviews in the SSLUG Garden situated the interview within the research landscape. I chose to interview research participants to facilitate a conversation about and, more importantly, with the SSLUG Garden. This approach facilitated opportunities for an interview to connect with salient features, remembered and emergent (Bergeron et al., 2014, pp. 119 – 120). In other words, conducting interviews in the SSLUG Garden enabled a dynamic reading and sharing of one’s understanding of and engagement with landscape. A raised bed, as an example, may recall a memory of an experience in the SSLUG Garden (or another, differently located experience) or the same raised bed may “shine” with previously unnoticed character. To explicitly facilitate this connection, I asked interviewees, at the midpoint of the interview process, to pause and silently experience – choosing to either remain stationary or move around – the SSLUG Garden. Inviting participants to move around and also walking with them through the SSLUG Garden helped to draw out “meanings attached to the experience of places (Bergeron et al., p. 119).

**Focus group charette.** I conducted a charette to invite the various
understandings of the SSLUG Garden into conversation. I asked participants to discuss their past and present experiences with the SSLUG Garden. In addition, I asked focus group charette participants to imagine particular (and located) transformations to the SSLUG Garden that might improve (or make more numerous) these or others experiences. To begin, I paired participants and asked them to walk through the SSLUG landscape and discuss [1] engagements afforded by the SSLUG Garden, [2] engagements not afforded by the SSLUG Garden, [3] imagined improvements to the SSLUG landscape (see charette, Appendix A). To represent these discussions, each pair of participants was asked to locate and describe their responses to the above three prompts on a map of the SSLUG Garden. The charette concluded by convening all participant pairs and inviting them to share their (and respond to one anothers’) mapping. The SSLUG Garden is understood and engaged in a variety of ways by a variety of people. The focus group was a microcosm of this variety and, therefore, represented some of the potential relationships among various understandings and engagements (Babbie, 2013, p. 320). I used the results of this charette to populate a public Google Map titled “Imagined SSLUG Landscape” as one way of publicizing this research. More specifically, the Google Map serves as an active repository for this data and a catalyst/starting point for further community-driven research and engagement. The “Imagined SSLUG Landscape” map is provided in Appendix A.

**Grounded theory.** I selected grounded theory (GT) as a methodological approach as a means of contextualizing or grounding data
collection and analysis in the variety of lived experiences with the SSLUG Garden. This approach assumes that the most accurate description and understanding of a particular social situation is to be found within the lived experiences of that particular situation. I used GT, then, not to verify supposed understandings and engagements of the SSLUG Garden but rather to facilitate their emergence and ground my description and understanding in the narrative and illustrative responses of research participants. GT involves coding research data and then exploring relationships among these data to derive sensitizing concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1997, p. 65). Strauss and Corbin describe sensitizing concepts as, “suggestive ideas” about what might be going on in a particular social situation or “an emergent meaningful vocabulary that alerts the researcher to promising avenues of investigation” (1997, p. 65).

Weaving the most durable of these emergent sensitizing concepts or suggestive ideas together, I then develop theoretical descriptions that describe particular “grounded” relationship between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden.

However, these sensitizing concepts and the relationships they comprise are, “incomplete without”:

(a) locating experience within the larger conditional frame or context in which it is embedded; and (b) describing the process or the ongoing and changing forms of action/interaction/emotions that are often in response to events and the problems that arise to inhibit action/interaction. We also look for consequences because these come back to be part of the next sequence of action. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 17)

In order to describe the conditional or contextual aspects of emergent data, I make use of situational analysis, which I discuss in the next section. However, even while GT is enriched and made more critical by considering the
conditional frame or context, this research concerns the ‘real’, immediate or local situations of landscape. To draw out these immediate experiences, I relied on a mixed-methods approach of visual research and qualitative “go-along” interviews. I outline these in more detail in this chapter’s Methods section.

**Situational analysis.** As mentioned in the previous chapter, I conceive of the landscape process as including a variety of individual and collective relationships with landscape. Therefore, I found it helpful to bring in situational analysis to better analyze and describe this presumed multiplicity. Situational analysis enables my methodology toward this end by “allowing for the possibility of multiple social processes” (Clarke, 2005, p. 16) each uniquely situated within a particular set of relations and interrelated to different degrees. For example, a student who volunteers in the SSLUG Garden experiences a different social process (in relation to the SSLUG Garden) than does an employee of Facility Services. These differences, however, are not reducible to a single process. Understanding and engagement of the SSLUG Garden is unique but simultaneous. I used situational analysis to illuminate this multiplicity through “three main cartographic approaches:

1. **Situational maps** that lay out the major human, nonhuman, discursive, and other elements in the research situation of inquiry and provoke analysis of relations among them;
2. **Social worlds/arenas maps** that lay out the collective actors, key nonhuman elements, and the arena(s) of commitment and discourse within which they are engaged in ongoing negotiations — meso-level interpretations of the situation; and
3. **Positional maps** that lay out the major positions taken, and *not* taken, in the data vis-a-vis particular axes of difference, concern, and controversy around issues in the situation of inquiry. (Clarke, 2005, p. xxii)

These approaches help in “elucidating the key elements, materialities,
discourses, structures, and conditions that characterize the situation of inquiry” (Clarke, 2005, p. xxii). Through these maps, the “situation per se becomes the ultimate unit of analysis, and understanding its elements and their relations is the primary goal” (Clarke, 2005, p. xxii). The situation serves as a medium through which one participant’s sociocultural position can be related to another. Situating participant understanding and engagement of SSLUG within (and also outside, beside, etc) simultaneous and overlapping social contexts allows this inquiry to “move beyond the ‘knowing subject’ to also analyze what else is there in social life – materially and discursively” (Clarke, 2005, p. 177).

A narrative and illustrative description of the SSLUG Garden is a situation constituted by “elements and their relations” (Clarke, 2005, p. xxii) unique to each research participant. These differences among research participants are situated within the timeframe of this research, which is, itself, situated within many other enmeshed layers of difference, past and future. While my analysis primarily considers the present situation, I do recognize how essential past and future are to any present situation. However, to meaningfully and deeply engage this research, given time constraints, I will focus on the present and only summarily discuss this broader temporal frame.

**Research Participants.** Thirteen research participants were selected and recommended based on their relationship with the SSLUG Garden. I interviewed faculty, staff, and students that were either key SSLUG Garden stakeholders or worked/studied in proximity to the SSLUG Garden. Initially, using purposive or judgment sampling (Babbie, 2013, p. 190), I selected
research participants whom I thought were because either directly or
indirectly linked to (in dialogue with) the SSLUG Garden.

Analysis Process

In research illustrations, interview transcripts and focus group maps, I
coded for themes of understanding and engagement, which I next explored for
categories. I situated these categories in relation to broader social contexts to
give legibility to the full SLLUG landscape situation (non-human actors,
positionality of research participant, etc). I found it useful and interesting to
shift from sensitizing categories to sensitizing situations. As described above,
sensitizing categories are “suggestive ideas” (Strauss & Corbin, 1997) about
what might be going on in a particular social situation. Therefore, sensitizing
situations are suggestive locations within the SSLUG Garden that were
recurrent in narrative and/or illustrative data. Through their recurrence,
three sensitizing situations emerged as particularly important to participant
experience with the SSLUG Garden: the painted rain barrel, the Joel Olson
Memorial and pathways of the SSLUG Garden. These sensitizing situations
reoccurred in two ways. Research participants either expressed immediate
understanding of and/or engagement with these sensitizing situations or were
provoked by these sensitizing situations to offer further explanation of their
(broader) understanding of and engagement with landscape. I found the
development of sensitizing situations helpful in honoring the grounded theory
and situational analysis approach to landscape research. Moving away from
abstract sensitizing concepts toward sensitizing situations focuses the inquiry
on the immediate landscape where, I have argued, outcomes are located. As a
consequence of grounding these results in only three sites, I omit some data. However, grounding the results with only three sites provides a coherence to the results of this research. To begin exploring the results, I completed a situational map (Figure 4.1) and a social worlds /arenas map (Appendix B). These maps help to express the relationships present in this inquiry and bring sensitizing concepts to the surface.

Figure 4.1: Situational Map 1
Figure 4.2: Positional Map 2

Figure 4.3: Positional Map 2
Through positional maps, I analyzed participants’ understandings and engagements by plotting narrative data between the immediate experience of landscape, the x-axis, and socioculturally constructed experience of landscape, the y-axis. First, I constructed a positional map using responses from only a handful of interviews as a means of exploring the process and potential relationships. I then plotted my summarizing memos for each research participant interview (Figure 4.2). Next, I plotted narrative data from the focus group charette (Figure 4.3). Finally, I plotted narrative data concerning the rain barrel, the Olson Memorial and Classroom and the pathways of the SSLUG Garden to arrive at located sensitizing concepts (Appendix B).

I completed this analysis in three iterations. First, I selectively transcribed the recorded interviews for data relating to understanding and engagement of landscape. Second, I paired and coded each research participants' illustration and transcribed interview. In the third and final iteration, I mapped the collected whole of these paired illustrations and interviews (Positional Map 2). Throughout all three iterations I maintained the practice of memoing as a way recording observations that emerged within or between the data and exploring their relationships. As Bernard (2012) describes, memoing guides the adjustment and refinement of the emerging theoretical model: “With each subsequent transcript [...] negative cases and pieces of data” demand refinement of the “emerging model [...] adjusted [...] to include the full range of variation that emerged in the transcripts” (533).

However, “to understand experience, that experience must be located within and can’t be divorced from the larger events[...]” (Corbin & Strauss,
Certainly, the limited scope of this inquiry cannot give fair consideration to the variability that comprises the relationship between the NAU community and SSLUG Garden. Furthermore, even if this research were capable of considering this variability and complexity, its modeling would be serviceable only to a static relationship between the NAU community and SSLUG landscape. While community, landscape and their interrelationship are all dynamic, grounded theory is a mechanism by which to move – our research/theorizing and engagement – in step with that dynamism. The dynamism demands that we forever return to the site or situation(s) of inquiry to theorize how understanding and engagement operate in a particular context. The goal of this inquiry is, therefore, not a finalizing statement or theory, which, now and forever, defines the relationship between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden. Rather, this methodological approach models and facilitates our perception of momentary and situated characteristics between any community and any locale.

**Limitations.** The results of this approach represent only a snapshot of a dynamic relationship between community and landscape. This relationship is especially dynamic because it concerns a (generally) transient university community. This inquiry and its results are relative to this (generally) transient community. Furthermore, these results are derived from qualitative data collected over only two months – February and March 2014. The timeframe and scope of this research limited the number of interviews and, thus, limited the amount and diversity of landscape understandings and
engagements. Lastly, this inquiry is necessarily limited to a single and particular type of landscape. As an inquiry of a community garden, the results must necessarily be contextualized and are, therefore, not fully generalizable (to, for example, an urban public square or even to a private garden). Additionally, due to my sociocultural and historic vantage my perception of and my conclusions about the relationship between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden are biased.

**Knowledge Translation.** I presented the findings of this research to my thesis committee, the Program Director of Sustainable Communities, Dr. Kim Curtis, NAU community and the public during the end of semester Sustainable Communities Public Presentations. Additionally, the results of my focus group charette are available as a public Google Map. Lastly, I have offered this research to Facility Service and the Office of Enrollment and Student Affairs at NAU in support of continued funding for the Campus Organic Gardener position and for the maintenance, improvement and expansion of the SSLUG Garden and other similar landscaping projects.

**Representation.** I represented the data of this research at three concrete sites to honor my methodology (to *ground* my results). As I have alluded to throughout, the most reciprocal understanding of and engagement with landscape is to be derived through immediate experience. I included analytical maps and participant illustrations to further and differently represent the results and my discussion of this research.

**Validity.** Elaborating a *dialogic* relationship between community and landscape continues the spatial philosophies of Buber (1937), Lefebvre (1991),
Foucault (1986), et al by modeling a mode of inquiry, which “subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 73). All inquiries are necessarily located – physically or abstractly – and their understanding depends on awareness of location, relationship and movement. Research, then, is most effective when it operates in or represents a located situation of inquiry.

The conclusions of this research are valid so long as they invite the reader into better comprehension of the situation. Comprehensibly describing the situation provides content for other interpretations and further descriptions and theorizing concerning the SSLUG Garden and other landscape inquiries. On the other hand, my interpretation of the situation achieves validity by reflexively recognizing its – my own – situation and bias.

**Bias.** I am situated among intersecting narratives of self, theory and research. As elaborated in the introduction, I am concerned about the relationship between communities and landscape. I interpreted the results of this inquiry from the critical position that sustainable communities are literally built through reciprocal relationships with landscape. While this research is grounded in the relationship between the SSLUG Garden and the NAU community, my goal has always been to critically and broadly understand the community-landscape relationship. Finally, in this research, I have taken the theoretical stance that the relationship between landscape and community is dialogic. My analysis and discussion are informed by and strive toward a better conceptualization of this dialogic landscape. Valid conclusions,
thus, are those made with full transparency to these influences. Accepting these influences, this inquiry is effective by contributing to bodies or genres of work that concern the legibility and improvement of the relationship between human communities and landscapes – both urban/rural and local/global. Furthermore, the conclusions and theoretical descriptions are only valid if applicable to or effective in ‘real’ situations and landscapes. In this thesis, they are valid if effective in providing legibility to the landscape process in the SSLUG Garden and offering relevant data and/or recommendations for improving that process. The next chapter outlines and discusses the results of this inquiry.

**Reflection.** Collecting interview and illustrative data around three SSLUG Garden situations helped to ground the results of this inquiry in particular and immediate landscape situations. In the introduction, I stated that the outcomes of the landscape process are always located. Again, the process of landscape is produced by and produces consequences, which affect particular location(s) and the communities that dwells there. The themes of my analysis emerged from the relational situation between the NAU community and the three sensitizing situations within the SSLUG Garden. Go-along and on-site interviews facilitated the collection of narrative data that was grounded (or located) and both remembered and emergent (presently noticed or remembered). The illustrations were less consistent. Some participants engaged the illustration without much enthusiasm, while others did not produce any illustrative data. Others engaged the illustration enthusiastically and some even found it constructive. This last level of
engagement produced valuable illustrative data in support of participant narratives (a few are included above). I attribute the inconsistency of illustrative data to inexplicit instructions and participant discomfort and/or disinterest in illustration. Finally, convening research participants for the focus group charette was an effective means of bringing multiple narratives into conversation. Of the thirteen interviews, five research participants attended the charette. Additionally, the charette produced meaningful data both for analysis in this inquiry and also for future improvements and changes to the SSLUG Garden and the NAU campus. Rescheduling the charette with only one week’s notice is largely to blame for the limited participation.
Chapter 4. Results

The methods outlined above produced both illustrative and narrative data about the ways in which the NAU community understands and engages the SSLUG Garden or landscape. I begin this chapter by contextualizing the results of this inquiry between general ideas about the SSLUG Garden and specific experiences of the SSLUG Garden. I next discuss concepts that emerged during my analysis of understanding of and engagement with three sensitizing situations in the SSLUG Garden – the painted rain barrel, the Joel Olson Memorial, and the pathways of the SSLUG Garden. I introduce each of these sections and sensitizing situations with an exemplary illustration and a brief analysis of that illustration. I then discuss a number of themes of participant understanding of and engagement with each sensitizing situation. As described in the methods section, I used situational, social worlds/arena and positional maps to arrive at these concepts of understanding and engagement. These maps and other theoretical explorations are included in Appendix B.

Ideas. This section includes a variety of ideas that research participants expressed about the SSLUG Garden’s. The Graduate Facilitator for the SSLUG Action Research Team and others understand the SSLUG Garden to be a demonstration project for the communication of skills and knowledge about gardening, food and the environment. As a freshman Olson Scholar described, this aspect of the SSLUG Garden has helped him in “reconnecting...with where my food comes from and reacquainting me with
the knowledge of the land that I can use to shape my own understanding of the world around me.” However, the AVP of Facility Services, does not see the garden so clearly. He wonders, “What is the ultimate point of having the garden? Is that to teach just how to grow their own food or is it to show how we can have a community garden?” Similarly, the Sustainability Manager with Facility Services, questions whether growing something only for demonstration is ultimately “helpful to the environment.” The AVP of Facility Services commented that the SSLUG Garden requires explanation: “don’t just throw it out there and expect people to know. We’re here to educate as well.”

While the garden has developed from the well-intentioned idea of former MA Sustainable Communities students and through the efforts of the Campus Organic Gardener, students, faculty, staff, and community, the Director of Disability Resources commented that the garden’s organic growth has produced “a design that worked for them [involved parties]” but has not “necessarily consider[ed] the entire population of people on campus who might want to interact with it [the SSLUG Garden].” The Campus Organic Gardener attributes her hand in the physical organization of the SSLUG Garden to her “ecological and botanical background.” For her the SSLUG Garden must “be sustainable. You can't plant ferns here. I mean you could but the idea is to grow things that will thrive.” The interim Director of the Sustainable Communities program, shares this vision for the SSLUG Garden. She would like for the SSLUG Garden to become net-zero water users, citing climatic conditions of the arid SW. In contrast, an SBS West custodian remarked how she would enjoy more water features (eg water fountain, fish
pond) in the SSLUG Garden. The Director of the Sustainability Communities Program and the Campus Organic Gardener (coming from an ecological and botanical background) derive understanding of the SSLUG Garden through a particular – sensitive to issues of sustainability – sociocultural construction of landscape.

The Campus Organic Gardener also commented that “the human connection – between human and with the land” is an integral part of how she approaches her position. Two students expressed the important role the SSLUG Garden has played for them in experiencing and understanding connection. As an example, an undergraduate student offered this opinion of community gardens:

In a community garden its kind of like ok well you can’t do this I’ll pick up the slack now. Everybody fills a role. Having a community garden, you feel more socially connected. We all want to feel socially connected. We want to feel like the work were doing is benefiting not only ourselves but other people.

Another student described that, “SSLUG made me realize how disconnected I was from not only other people but my community as well.” The Campus Organic Gardener understands that the inclusivity of the garden is built from the ground up, remarking:

I don’t use any pesticides or herbicides or anything. I don’t kill anything in the garden. I want it to be a safe place for all beings. We’re not even killing the aphids. When you start making those boundaries then you are already excluding and you can do that with people.

In the embrace of this inclusivity, the Graduate Facilitator for the SSLUG Action Research Team has envisioned and begun planning a veganic garden plot (a plot that uses zero animal products). In exploring the possibility of this
different space, she highlighted the importance of “being able to bring my passion to the garden and seeing people, [Campus Organic Gardener] in particular, just so open to that idea was just really inspiring. I feel like I can carry that to other communities that I'm in.”

**Experiences.** This section includes a variety of ways that research participants described their experience of the SSLUG Garden.

Research participants shared a variety of responses about their experience with the SSLUG Garden. These most often spoke to sensory – taste, smell, feel, etc – and aesthetic experiences. Participants described their experiences as “calming,” a “release,” a “safe space,” “cozy,” etc. These immediate experiences seem to influence understanding of the surrounding landscape. The Graduate Facilitator for the SSLUG Action Research Team, for example, commented: “How I feel standing outside of this building would be much different if there was no garden, it just kind of brings life to the area, a lot of beauty.” Similarly a custodian of SBS Castro, finds that the SSLUG Garden “makes the building look more alive...people just sit there...relaxing.” As the SSLUG Garden lies dormant over winter, the Director of the Sustainable Communities program commented that she doesn’t “look at it that closely” but during the first half of our interview, which took place within SBS West, she “was imagining the SSLUG Garden...imagining this green bounty.” Another research participant identifies with the SSLUG Garden through the “taste of strawberries and peas.” In contrast to these generally positive experiences, some research participants described their experience of the SSLUG Garden as “confusing” and as not well “connected.”
Located Results

This research ultimately concerns the outcomes of the landscape process. Gathering results around three sensitizing situations maintained focus on the outcomes of the landscape process. During analysis, several themes emerged (Appendix B). These themes were *visibility/legibility, policy, relationships, investment, gathering, expression, invitation/accessibility, structure and encounter.* Themes speak to the relationship *between* the sensitizing situation and the research participants. In the three sections below, I discuss themes of understanding of and engagement with the rain barrel (visibility/legibility, policy, relationships), the Joel Olson Memorial (impetus, gathering, expression), and the pathways of the SSLUG Garden (invitation/accessibility, structure, encounter).

Rain Barrel

The rain barrel was relocated closer to the SSLUG Garden and improved in the fall of 2013. It was positioned closer to the SSLUG Garden along the south wall of SBS West. The rain barrel is understood and engaged in a variety of ways. Narrative and illustrative data concerning the rain barrel demonstrates how understandings and engagements of the SSLUG Garden are influenced by legibility/visibility, policy and relationships.
Legibility/visibility. Research participants highlighted legibility and visibility as they discussed the rain barrel. These concepts suggest that landscape understanding depends on being able to see and easily “read” the landscape. One student remembered that the “rain barrel was here but it was sitting down in that corner.” She suggested that by “moving it closer to the garden...more people saw it and were able to learn about water issues and why we have the rain barrel.” By making the rain barrel more visible, she seems to suggest that the SSLUG Garden can remind passersby of contemporary water
issues. An undergraduate Engineering student, offers further explanation:

We moved the rain barrel to an actual smart location and then we lifted it up so it actually has pressure...painted it so it actually stands out and in a world of dullness, especially in the winter around here...so to bring some color...bring Flagstaff to the garden kind of the mountains, the aspects of the garden, the rain barrel to me signifies sustainability.

In addition to moving the rain barrel, this student highlighted how painting it increased its visibility and brought other elements of the surrounding landscape into the SSLUG Garden. Between these two students, the SSLUG Garden is understood to more readily communicate a value of sustainability by making more visible the sustainable features of the SSLUG Garden.

However, the AVP of Facility Services commented that “what’s missing I think...is that interpretive...what was intended out here. You could easily have something by the rain collection and talk about why do you collect rain water, what do you do with it.” For him, the rain barrel’s visibility alone does not elicit a clear value of sustainability for the SSLUG Garden. Seeing, in other words, does not necessarily result in understanding. The more visible rain barrel, for those predisposed to notions of sustainability and water conservation, may clearly express a value of sustainability. For those not predisposed to notions of sustainability and water conservation, however, it may not.

**Policy.** The rain barrel also elicited comments of understanding and engagement in relation to the governance or policy dictating the community’s engagement with the SSLUG Garden. As the Director of the Sustainable Communities program and I discussed the expansion of the SSLUG Garden
and another water catchment system on the western wall of SBS Castro, she stated that she “would love to see SSLUG Garden make as a condition of its expansion...[that] they be net-zero water users.” For her, the water conservation that the rain barrel represents is understood as a necessary engagement with the SSLUG Garden. It seems, in her opinion, there should be no choice in the matter of water conservation in the SSLUG Garden.

While many projects (of different spaces) have presented challenges, the Campus Organic Gardener, remarked that “the rain barrel is an exception.” She continued that it “was not hard to push through partly because I didn’t ask too much permission and it was already here and we just improved it.” Similarly, concerning the original installation of the rain barrel, she speculates that “they actually put it in in the dark of night cause the photograph I had of it was taken at night and it was way over in the corner there. I don’t think they asked anyone.” Here, she alludes to how the installation and relocation of the rain barrel were both done outside the auspices of any governing body. In this case, the Campus Organic Gardener, contrasting the faculty member’s comments, understands the governance of the SSLUG Garden to be a hindrance to her engagement. Policy or rules governing engagement of the SSLUG Garden, as both the comments of the Director of the Sustainable Communities program and the Campus Organic Gardener illuminate, can be both (and possibly simultaneously) stifling and/or supportive of particular understandings of and engagements with the SSLUG Garden.
**Relationships.** The rain barrel also surfaced examples of understanding and engagement of the SSLUG Garden as bound up in relationships with other people. For the Campus Organic Gardener, the relocation and improvement of the rain barrel “epitomizes...the best of how this garden can work as far as this garden being a community project” and recalls that it “started out with a conversation on [a] bench with [the Director of the Sustainable Communities program].” She credits both the idea for and the realization of the rain barrel to her relationship with the Director of the Sustainable Communities program and community. The Campus Organic Gardener’s understanding and engagement of the SSLUG Garden should, therefore, not be conceived of individually but rather as woven into the fabric of her relationships with others.

The description of related conversations with the Campus Organic Gardener also suggests that understanding and engagement hinge on relationships with others. The Director of the Sustainable Communities program believes that she “did plant the seed in [the Campus Organic Gardener’s] mind about working with AWGA [Action Group for Water Advocacy] to get [another] rainwater catchment and students took that up and ran with it and got it.” Here we see, first, the Director planting a seed with the Campus Organic Gardener and the Campus Organic Gardener, in turn, collaborating with AGWA to secure another situation of water conservation in the SSLUG Garden.

Narratives about the physical work of relocating and improving the
rain barrel also illuminated the relational understanding and engagement of the SSLUG Garden. An undergraduate Olson Scholar remembered, “working with...[another undergraduate SSLUG Garden volunteer].” He continued, “He and I did the majority of the swinging” to dig out an overflow watercourse. During our interview, this student put particular emphasis on working with others to relocate and improve the rain barrel. His understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden seems to hinge on his human relationships with others. Finally, highlighting the collaborative nature of the rain barrel project, SSLUG Action Research Team graduate facilitator seemed surprised at the speed with which the project was completed:

Students from AGWA painted the rain barrel...and it’s just beautiful. When we first started digging at it the ground was so hard and it just seemed it was going to take a week to get done. I think it was only a couple of days of work. I just thought it would take a lot longer than what it did. There were a lot of different groups of people involved in that. I enjoyed that project because it was something that’s from start to finish.

**Joel Olson Memorial**

The Joel Olson Memorial honors the life and work of NAU professor Joel Olson. The Memorial includes a plaque affixed to a large bolder and a circle of benches under Ponderosa pine trees. Narrative and illustrative data about the Joel Olson Memorial grounds understanding and engagement in concepts of impetus, expression and gathering.
The Graduate Facilitator of the SSLUG Action Research Team completed her illustration as a collage of photos. At the center of this collage is the Joel Olson Memorial. She described that she located the Joel Olson Memorial at the center because, for her, it is a very important part of the SSLUG Garden. More specifically, she highlighted her affinity for the rock cairns or stacked rocks on top of the Joel Olson Memorial. Additionally, she spoke during our interview to her enjoyment of the Campus Organic Gardener’s tours (bottom left) and the team effort of relocating the rain barrel (top right).

**Investment.** Participants described particular reasons for their initial contact and eventual relationship with the SSLUG Garden. The Joel Olson Memorial was representative of this investment for a student and an NAU administrator. A participant in the (Joel) Olson Scholars Institute and Learning Community was introduced to the SSLUG Garden as part of “the 3-week Olson Scholar Institute” prior to his first fall semester at NAU. During this summer visit, he remarked that, “immediately, that day of the institute I was hooked.” This visit served to connect him with the SSLUG Garden and the VELO composting program, for which he now serves a strong leadership role.
His involvement in the SSLUG Garden and with VELO Composting, while prepared by other parts of his life (diet and food were important in his family and highlighted during our interview), was initiated through the Olson Scholar Institute. Similarly, the AVP for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs cited an emotional "investment" in the SSLUG Garden because of the Olson Scholars Program. Additionally, she commented that, during her interim position as director of the NAU Honors Program, “some folks from the SSLUG Garden came to me and asked if honors students might be interested in participating.” As a result of this inquiry, she commented that the SSLUG Garden "became then a more real place for me...something then that I was paying more attention to.” In both her role with the Honors Program and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, seems to frame her understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden through the opportunities it provides to students.

Expression. Two research participants commented on the rock art or cairns (stacks of rocks) that adorn the Joel Olson Memorial. The Graduate Facilitator’s and an SBS custodian’s discussion of these cairns subtly illuminated the role of expression in their understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden. The Graduate Facilitator could not remember seeing the cairns until “this year when [she] came back in the fall [2013].” She continued:

I always like the rock art when I see it anywhere and then to see it on that memorial was just really meaningful to me. I guess just to see the people who were taking the time to express themselves that way, I don’t know... it was just touching.

Similarly, an SBS Castro custodian explained his curiosity about the cairns:
I don’t know if she [the Campus Organic Gardener] put these rocks on top of that boulder [Joel Olson Memorial] or if kids did it because people come through and do their own thing, you know and I’m trying to find out whoever did that so I can understand what they had in mind because that is strange to me. I show up and there it was. I wish I’d have been here while they were doing it so I could have asked them. Maybe tomorrow I’ll get that information.

Continuing this conversation about the cairns, the SBS Castro custodian believed that, because it’s a community garden, the community will and should feel permitted to “add” their own “stuff” so long as it does not “take away from the garden.” The Graduate Facilitator commented that “before [I] had just seen them there and really thought it was beautiful. It was really neat to see people doing that.”

Judging from their comments about the rock cairns, these two NAU community members, to different degrees, seem to approve of or value the cairns as an individual expression in a community space. This suggests that, in their understanding, the SSLUG Garden is accommodating of some forms of personal and/or collective expression.

**Gathering.** The Joel Olson Memorial is understood and engaged as a place for gathering. Specifically, research participants highlighted the circle of benches or “classroom.” An SBS West custodian commented that the circle of benches is a place where “you could have lunch or a picnic...maybe during the summer people could sit there and relax.” From her vantage as SBS West custodian, she imagines using the circle of benches for leisure. Conversely, during the focus group, a student and the AVP of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs remarked that “the circle of benches is like a place of learning and reflection...group discussion...an opportunity for learning and place for conversation and interaction.” Additionally, the Director of the
Sustainable Communities program believes that the SSLUG Garden and the Olson Memorial in particular is “a site where we can hold classes...or gather.” All three understand and spoke of engaging the circle of benches in ways that involve their positions in the University – administration, student, faculty.

**Pathways**

Pathways guide movement into, out of and through the SSLUG Garden. These pathways are constructed with mulch, pavers, pavement and glass. In this subsection, I discuss pathways both materially and metaphorically to express data on movement. Broadly, participants spoke to the ways in which they moved (or were unable to move) through the SSLUG Garden, providing additional insight into their understanding and engagement of the SSLUG Garden. Narrative and illustrative data about pathways and movement coalesced into themes of structure, invitation/accessibility and encounter.
Several research participants shared experiences and opinions regarding the structure of the SSLUG Garden. By structure, I mean the ways in which understanding and especially engagement are bounded either by the physical organization of the SSLUG Garden or by the program which overlays it. An undergraduate Olson Scholar recalled, “when I was first getting started, [the Campus Organic Gardener] was showing me how to do things and I stepped outside the path and [Campus Organic Gardener]...she’s like ‘Get out!’ I had no idea you didn’t want to compact the soil.” In this student’s experience, the physical organization of the SSLUG Garden did not sufficiently communicate the intended structure of the Garden. Instead, the
Campus Organic Gardener had to reinforce what the paths represent by informing the student why it was important to abide by the garden's structure (in this case its network of paths). To this point, another student described how the glass pathways are an example of how, by “staying on our path” human communities can ensure “respect” for “parts” of the environment. Here, understanding and engagement are critically informed by a structure. The pathways of the SSLUG Garden, for these two students, represent the somewhat utilitarian lines of the SSLUG Garden and communicate where and where not to walk. The structure provided by the pathways promotes understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden that shows respect for "parts" of the environment.

In contrast, the Director of the Sustainable Communities program stated that while “there has to be an order in a garden that size" there also "has to be a little chaos....” Drawing from the entirety of my interview with her, I interpret her comments to mean that if the structure is too rigid the SSLUG Garden becomes inhospitable. In her role as facilitator, the Campus Organic Gardener tries to work between the garden as a structured place and a chaotic place. She has found that structure is necessary to “hold the group together but not so much that people feel like they’re being told what to do.” Ultimately, however, the Campus Organic Gardener reserves the right to say “I need it to be this way.” When she finds this right balance as facilitator, she describes it as “magic,” which engenders investment from volunteers “because they thought of that.” All the above NAU community members describe structure as a necessary element in the SSLUG Garden. However, the Director
of the Sustainable Communities program and the Campus Organic Gardener importantly highlight that the structure of the SSLUG Garden should not be so rigid as to be uninviting.

**Invitation/accessibility.** Participants described understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden along a spectrum of invitation and accessibility. The Director of Disability Services at NAU “get[s] the sense that you want it [the SSLUG Garden] to be a welcoming place.” However, he does note that the “main entrance, the arbor, is a non-accessible way into the garden” because there is “a big curb there.” He continues that the pathways, both their width and their construction, may be a barrier to participation and movement for persons with mobility impairments. He views accessibility and universal design (design for all) as congruent with sustainability and/or invitation and inclusivity. During the focus group charette, he explained that, “Accessibility is really just about how do we try to make those experiences available to as many people as we possibly can.” His understanding of the SSLUG Garden seems to be influenced by his work with Disability Services.

The SBS West custodian contrasts the SSLUG Garden, where “actually you can look at the garden...you have a sidewalk where you can look” with the landscape outside the Riles Building (her former work placement) where “you can’t walk through it because there’s grass and there’s mud.” The accessibility of the sidewalk, for her, is inviting. Her understanding and engagement echoes that of the Director of Disability Resources. The pathways of and movement through the SSLUG Garden invite different levels and types of engagement. While not universally accessible, the SSLUG Garden, as the SBS
West custodian noted, is more accessible and inviting than some other campus landscapes.

**Encounter.** The pathways of and movement through the SSLUG Garden and landscapes in general were discussed during a number of interviews. In several interviews, these discussions included encounters with other people, the more-than-human world and the subtle feeling of particular landscapes. Understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden are, thus, influenced by interactions that take place in the SSLUG Garden. A Sustainable Communities graduate student and SSLUG Action Research Team facilitator is “always run[ning] into people”:

[MA Sustainable Communities Program Coordinator] is always walking by...people that just walk by...some random anthropology people. She [a woman with a dog] always is walking by the garden, like every time I’m in the garden...[she]always stops and talks with [Campus Organic Gardener] and asks about strawberries or something.

Moving through the garden, “even just walking to class,” she states, “I just smile, I just feel better.” While she did not describe her encounters with others as significant in influencing her understanding and engagement, her movement through the Garden itself does seem significant. Highlighting the “feel” of parts of campus, the Associate Vice President of Facility Services, described how he is “always walking through campus.” During this time he noted, “sometimes subtly you don’t feel right. I think our job is to figure out what that subtle thing is so we can get it fixed so that people go, ‘Oh this is a really nice place, I felt good here.’” Similarly, the AVP of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs invited NAU President John Haeger on a walking tour of the NAU Flagstaff Campus because, as she remarked, university presidents “spend a lot of time off the campus, they don’t walk
around on the campus.” During their visit to the SSLUG Garden, she commented that President Haeger was able to see “things he hadn't seen before” and “visualize...the need for something like a shed” in the SSLUG Garden. Thus, President Haeger's understanding of and indirect engagement with the SSLUG Garden seem influenced by his visit to the SSLUG Garden.

Two participants described encountering the more-than-human world in the SSLUG Garden. After silently walking through the SSLUG Garden one participant commented, “And of course [I observed] the raven. There is that wildness.” Similarly, the Campus Organic Gardener commented, “I notice insects a lot. I’m noticing a particular kind of solitary bee or a butterfly foraging on a plant that I planted for them. So that’s wonderful as well.” For both these participants understanding of the SSLUG Garden includes a notion that it is home to a broader ecological community. The Campus Organic Gardener turns this understanding into engagement by planting habitats for insects. The SSLUG Garden also is an opportunity to encounter the seasons. While “mostly just feeling like its winter and kind of barren,” a graduate Psychology student, realized “as you look closer you start seeing all these green things popping up and realize all the stuff underneath ready to pop up.” By waking through the Garden, this student newly understood that, while from a distance the garden seems dormant, plants are already starting to sprout.

**Summary of Grounded Concepts**

Above, I outlined nine concepts of understanding and engagement
relative to three sensitizing situations in the SSLUG Garden. As stated in the
introductory chapter, the landscape process (operating between sociocultural
construction and immediate experience) produces outcomes that are located
in and affect both human and broader ecological communities. Drawing
concepts from sensitizing situations was a means of focusing on and locating
the outcomes of the landscape process. One’s “impact upon” the world,
Wendell Berry states, “must become specific and tangible at some point”
(1997, 27). He continues that “sooner or later in his [humankind’s] behalf –
whether he approves or understands or not – a strip miner’s bulldozer tears
into a mountainside, a stand of trees is clear-cut, a gully washes through a
cornfield” (1997, 27). Participants, in describing their understanding of and
engagement with the above sensitizing situations, spoke to a variety of ways in
which the NAU community is affected by and affects the SSLUG Garden.
Chapter 5. Conclusion

Through interviews, illustrative data and the facilitation of a focus group, I have sought a better understanding of the ways in which the NAU community understands and engages with the SSLUG Garden. In addition, I analyzed the landscape process as a dialogue in order to evaluate the reciprocity between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden. The first section of this chapter – Concepts of Process – discusses conclusions for these two inquiries.

I located my inquiry between the NAU community and SSLUG Garden to better understand the relationships of influence or affect (Figure 5.1) between community and landscape.

Additionally, this particular inquiry has improved my sensitivity to the process of landscape. The second and third sections of this chapter – Grounded Inquiry, and Reciprocal Dialogue – more deeply engage these reasons for and my conclusions about this located inquiry. These two sections are followed by a concluding summary of this thesis.
Concepts of Process

In this section, I discuss my conclusions about the NAU community’s understandings of and engagements with the SSLUG Garden. First, I specifically discuss conclusions about the landscape process as it emerged at the three sensitizing sites. Second, I discuss my conclusions about the dialogic landscape process.

Understanding and engagement. (Re)assembling the themes that emerged at all three sensitizing sites, the landscape process in the SSLUG Garden can be summarized as contingent on particular past and present sociocultural positions vis-à-vis landscape and the landscape process. An individual’s “sense” of landscape, according to Barbara Bender, “extends out from the locale and from the present encounter and is contingent upon a larger temporal and spatial field of relationships” (2001, p. 6). As a result of this contingency, participant understanding of and engagement with the three sensitizing sites varied. This variability among participants seemed to result from different interpretations of the “convergence of biophysical-and-social processes (Wilcock et al, 2013, 592-3). In other words, while the rain barrel, Joel Olson Memorial and pathways of the SSLUG Garden each provided a consistent situation, participant's described different processes of understanding and engagement. The rain barrel, for example, is simultaneously interpreted as 'speaking for itself' (according to the students who relocated and improved it) and needing signage to explain its purpose (AVP of Facility Services). Similarly, the Joel Olson Memorial invites some members of the NAU community to creatively “express” themselves (cairns)
while inviting others into conversation or dialogue with other people. This finding contradicts Norberg-Schulz's suggestion that the landscape is a "total phenomenon" (1979, p. 7). Instead, it suggests an "assemblage" (Farías, 2010) of multiple and simultaneous understandings of and engagements with the SSLUG Garden.

While multiple and simultaneous, "efforts to make changes in [...] existing spatial configurations" of the SSLUG Garden were generally not at odds or contentious as Edward Soja (2010) predicts. There was minor contention over the aesthetics, purpose (and the communication of that purpose), and accessibility of the SSLUG Garden. The Director of Disability Resources, for example, highlighted that the ongoing design of the SSLUG Garden has not been significantly concerned with a design that is universally accessible. His understanding of the SSLUG Garden aligns with J.B. Jackson's description of the vernacular landscape as developed through the "indigenous organization and development of spaces" to meet the "needs of the focal community" (1984, p. 156). In the case of the SSLUG Garden the focal community – volunteers, faculty, staff, students, and community – designed the SSLUG Garden to meet their particular needs.

Thus, walking through the SSLUG Garden today, you are confronted by a socioculturally and historically referential landscape. The transformation of and imbuement of meaning and value onto the site of the SSLUG Garden expresses the sociocultural understanding of landscape belonging to a "small band of dedicated [MA Sustainable Communities] students" (Green NAU).

Critically speaking, the site of the SSLUG Garden was appropriated by
its founders to establish a “vegetable garden and community gathering place” (Green NAU). Bender insists that the landscape “is never inert; people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate it and contest it” (1993, p. 3). The appropriation of landscape, Bender argues, is “part of the way in which identities are created and disputed […]” (1993, p. 3). Whether to establish a vegetable garden and community gathering place or to extract resources from underneath Harrison County, the appropriation of landscape has the potential to marginalize or quiet the voice of (and justify the effect on) the immediate and local landscape. In Harrison County landscape, the marginalization of the immediate and local landscape is fairly obvious and its outcomes potentially calamitous. However, the site of the SSLUG Garden, while appropriated by students of the Sustainable Communities program, does not exhibit the same marginalization of the immediate landscape. In some ways, it seems to actually invite a more reciprocal process of landscape. To explore this reciprocity, I present results of this inquiry that demonstrate a range of reciprocal dialogue between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden.

**Dialogue and reciprocity.** Participant understanding of the SSLUG Garden, as I hypothesized, seemed to exist in tension between general, socioculturally constructed ideas about and immediate or specific experiences of landscape. Research participants variously assimilated the general and the specific qualities of the SSLUG Garden. Their responses (engagements) expressed a “multiplicity of voices” (Holloway & Kneale, 2000, p. 82). This process of assimilation and response describes the way dialogue operates between community and landscape. In Chapter 2, I suggested that the more
fully this understanding and engagement emerges from and returns to mutual relation with landscape the more reciprocal the affect between community and landscape. Drawing on examples of understanding and engagement, I now explore the dialogic reciprocity between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden.

As we walked up the sidewalk toward the 2nd floor south entrance to SBS West, the SBS West custodian abruptly halted his motion to mime how “everybody comes through and you can just watch the whole demeanor change, like...‘Oh’...they stop and pause and look and just that split second takes them away from the busy world.” The Director of the Sustainable Communities program has witnessed a similar sensitivity emerge during the Campus Organic Gardener’s regular tours of the SSLUG Garden, both between landscape and community and between individuals.

Seeing people together in the garden...really different folks. It gets people imagining. Imagining lets transform this, lets plant this. It really ignites...its like this wildfire of people looking at the landscape in the school and just feeling suddenly like its so boring its so ridiculous for this place.

The observations of the Director of Sustainability for Facility Services exemplify this understanding. After taking a minute to silently walk through the garden and observe (interview question 3), the she reflected:

I like the glass in the pathway out there. It made me think there’s probably [opportunities] for more art here, maybe sustainable art of sorts. I think about climate change when I think about things flowering maybe early. I really love how that couple has been gabbing away happily over there in the sun the whole time.

This understanding of and engagement with landscape seems to occur between the immediate situation – noticing things flowering early, for
example – and the sociocultural implications or meaning of that situation –
climate change, for example. Her concern was simultaneously with the things
flowering early in SSLUG Garden (where outcomes are located) and more
abstractly with global climate change. Additionally, the immediate landscape
situation (broken glass) seems to have incited the participant’s imagination
toward other possibilities for art in the SSLUG Garden. Lastly, the her
immediate experience allowed them to take “pleasure” (Bachelard, 1994) in
the “couple gabbing away happily.”

As expressed by the custodian above, the SSLUG Garden seems to
invite you to pause. One student, for example, finds that the SSLUG Garden
invites the NAU community to consider its interrelatedness. The student
noted that while “modern society...strive[s] for independence and to not be
bound to anything” the SSLUG Garden “fights that a little bit” and “[the
SSLUG Garden] says you live in a community with others and it impacts you.”
But in what ways is the quality of the SSLUG Garden different from any other
part of campus? Why is the SSLUG Garden more inviting than other parts of
campus? The Campus Organic Gardener explains that

Something’s obviously happening here. When I first started it was like it looks like
someone gardened here. Over time, particularly as the garden has kind of spread to
other areas its more obvious now that something is here. This is not just the same as
the rest of campus...it looks different.

From the Campus Organic Gardener’s comments, I infer that where dialogue
between community and landscape already exists, people are more inclined to
dialogue with landscape. Such is the belief of public space and public life
consultant Jan Gehl in *Life Between Buildings*:

Life between buildings is potentially a self-reinforcing process. When someone begins
to do something, there is a clear tendency for other to join in, either to participate
themselves or just to experience what the others are doing. (2011, 75)

I do wonder, however, what enables us to value the SSLUG Garden
over the rest of campus? Engaging landscape through design and organization
evidently influences our valuation of it. Indeed, invitation through landscape
design and organization emerged as a theme during the focus group. The
Director of Disability Resources, for example, interpreted the design of the
SSLUG Garden to “say here come walk through here, here come enter the
garden.” Even still, he wondered, “how do we make those main ways of
getting in and moving through the garden as usable and really as inviting as
possible.” Perhaps, as a student offered during our discussion of a staff garden
bed, “You have to give them a reason to get involved.” Finally, building on this
aspect of invitation, the Director of the Sustainable Communities program
expressed excitement for the idea of expanding the garden in front of SBS
Castro as a means of inviting Engineering students into relationship with the
landscape:

...thinking about engineers as designers and earth movers and it could be a really
enchanting place for them to experiment...The idea of engaging the engineering
students in...reconceptualizing this space in ways that might call on their skills and
design propensities.

These examples of dialogue demonstrate affect operating between the
NAU community and the SSLUG Garden. The experience shared by the SBS
West custodian, while relatively inconsequential, demonstrates a high degree
of reciprocity. In this example, understanding of and engagement with the
SSLUG Garden seems to become momentarily captivated. Similarly, in
Buber’s “I-Thou” communication with the world, “nothing is present [...] except this one being [...] only why you have it do you have the present” (1937, p. 33). The experience of the Director of Sustainability for Facility Services demonstrates the inevitable shift from an “I-Thou” relationship to an “I-It” relationship. Initially, the decorative glass is likely experienced just as Buber experiences the tree: “no impression, no play on [...] imagination, no value depending on [...] mood” (1937, p. 8). However, “Thou, after the relational event has run its course, is bound to become an It” (Buber, 1937, p. 33). Thus, as she realizes that there are more opportunities for art, the decorative glass becomes something to be “arranged in order. Only when things, from being our Thou, become our It, can they be co-ordinated” (Buber, 1937, pp. 30-31).

These dialogic explorations of the relationship between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden help to define and discern reciprocity. Significantly, analyzing the landscape process as a dialogue necessitates taking seriously the ways in which affect operates between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden (Figure 5.1). This critical approach to the relationship between community and landscape is important for two reasons. First, by more fully acknowledging the ways in which we affect and are affected by landscape, we can inform understanding of and engagement with landscape that supports the welfare of human and broader ecological communities. If a community’s understandings of and engagements with landscape ultimately affect that community then it follows that conscious and critical understandings of and engagements with landscape positively contribute to the sustainability of a community in place (Witta et al., 2012).
Second, and I think more importantly, landscape has an intrinsic value and should not be commodified as a “liquid asset held only as long as it enhances profit” (Balfour, 1999, p. 279) or benefits human communities. Acknowledging this intrinsic value raises landscape as a dialogic equal and delegitimizes any desecrations (Berry, 2005) of landscape.

**Grounded Inquiry**

This section is a reflection on the importance of focusing research in a particular location. As suggested in Chapter 2, the landscape appears to be assembled at local sites where material and immaterial converge (Farías, 2010). Following this line of thought, the landscape process ultimately concerns and affects local and specific places.

The approaches of grounded theory and situational analysis and qualitative data collection methods helped to keep the focus of this inquiry with the SSLUG Garden. These approaches revealed a variety of ways in which the human community at NAU understands and engages with the SSLUG Garden. Sitting in and walking through the SSLUG Garden with interviewees was both enjoyable and constructive. “The garden,” one research participant suggests, “certainly...calls people. Whether they answer the call or not is another thing but it calls people to the season they are in.” The go-along method served as an opportunity for research participants to interpret the call of the SSLUG Garden in both positive and negative ways.

In this thesis, I have used the terms *between, in tension,* and *simultaneous* to describe the landscape process. I maintain that these are all
apt descriptions of individual (or community) understanding and engagement of landscape. As the above subsection, *Understanding and engagement* and the results hopefully helped to illuminate, the landscape process is contingent. The immediate landscape can take precedence over the socioculturally constructed landscape or the socioculturally constructed landscape can take precedence over the immediate landscape. However, as already described, it is unlikely that either can be said to take full precedence over the other. It is probably more accurate to say that the socioculturally constructed and immediate landscapes are ubiquitous, always informing one another. Bender’s (2001) description of landscape helps clarify the relationship between the immediate landscape and the socioculturally constructed landscape. As aforementioned, Bender suggests that an individual’s “sense” of landscape “extends out from the locale and from the present encounter and is contingent upon a larger temporal and spatial field of relationships” (p. 6). In other words, broader societal and/or cultural understandings of landscape (Drexler, 2013; Marzorati, 2013) seem to encompass an individual’s or community’s present encounter of landscape. Fluency of the many ongoing dialogues (Spirn, 1998) that constitute a landscape holds the potential to awaken a critical consciousness (Freire, 2005) of the relationship between people and place. This critical consciousness may empower individuals and communities to challenge dialogues that harm or oppress people and/or place and support dialogues that benefit or liberate people and/or place.
Reciprocal Dialogue

This inquiry has demanded and improved my fluency of the process of landscape. As stated in the introduction, with this fluency, I hope to facilitate more reciprocal relationships between community and landscape. What follows are recommendations for engendering more reciprocal dialogue between community and landscape. I offer recommendations first, to the NAU community, second, to future inquirers and finally, to guide my own continued dialogue with landscape.

NAU community. The SSLUG Garden is a significant site on the NAU landscape. It has evolved fruitfully from its 2008 inauguration.

Figure 5.2; SSLUG Garden c. 2008. Credit: Dixon-McDonald & O’Meara, 2009.
Ian Dixon-McDonald and others challenged the dialogues that defined the NAU landscape. Their appropriation of the landscape is a model for projects of different spaces (Lefebvre, 1991); the SSLUG Action Research Team Graduate Facilitator’s veganic plot is a direct example. The SSLUG Garden is understood and engaged as a demonstration garden and a community space. Research participants, however, expressed concerns about its inclusivity and coherence. A number of participants expressed confusion about the meaning and purpose of the SSLUG Garden. One participant suggested that there is a “need for environmental interpretation.” This opinion suggests two possibilities. First, it suggests that the SSLUG Garden may, indeed, be incoherent. Second, it suggests that we may not possess the necessary fluency for deriving understanding without interpretation, signage, etc.
As one participant described of her times working in the SSLUG Garden, “not everybody stops and talks but they usually look at what we’re doing.” In what ways could the NAU landscape and the SSLUG Garden, the SSLUG Action Research Team in particular, invite passersby to stop and dialogue with landscape? How might the design, organization and facilitation of the SSLUG Garden engender reciprocal dialogue between community and landscape? In what ways can the SSLUG Garden be made more universally accessible and coherent? Some recommendations were offered during interviews and the focus group charrette (see Appendix A). The Director of Sustainability for Facility Services, as an example, is “excited about its [the SSLUG Garden’s] potential” but wonders how to “connect it more in the curriculum.”

Thoughtful organization of landscape can invite more reciprocal, that is, more relational, dialogue. The SSLUG Garden serves as an example of this. One participant suggested, “If you go beyond that [the SSLUG Garden] to where the grass is, there’s no sense of this rich liveliness that is happening all around us and the garden calls us to that.” Furthermore, broader historical and sociocultural contexts (Bender, 1993, 2001; Drexler, 2013) also determine our understanding of and engagement with landscape. The recommendations I offer the NAU community are, therefore, two-fold. Frist, I recommend explicitly facilitating landscape education that calls learners to entertain “I-Thou” relation with landscape. I believe that the on-site/“go-along” method used in this research is a pedagogical model for creating learning environments that invite “I-Thou” relation with landscape. I discuss my
recommendation of on-site/"go-along" method in more detail below. Second, I recommend implicitly designing campus to call passersby into relation with landscape. Judging from research participants’ responses, the SSLUG Garden is a model in this regard. As the SBS Castro custodian offered, the SSLUG Garden provides opportunities for passersby to “stop” and “pause” and, even if only briefly, become bound up in relation with the SSLUG Garden.

Therefore, I recommend (re)designing the NAU landscape in ways that slow or stop pedestrian travel and invite curiosity about the landscape. Jan Gehl’s (2010) *Cities for People* includes a variety of techniques (both inexpensive and expensive) for slowing pedestrian travel and inviting curiosity about the landscape. The SSLUG Garden successfully employs a number of these techniques: places to stand or sit, places from which to observe, places that provide protection from weather, and places to walk (Gehl, 2010, p. 239).

**Inquirers.** I took to this inquiry because I believe our understanding and engagement of a great many landscapes is, at best, speculative. For example, the exploitation of the Harrison County landscape for financial gain risks the health of ecological communities and human communities. Our alienation from and abuse of landscapes is ultimately detrimental to the health of all, including the abuser. I suspect, as foreshadowed by Henri Lefebvre (1991), Edward Soja (1980, 1989, 2010), David Harvey (2012) etc., that as more and more landscapes become desecrated and fewer dialogues (Spirn, 1998) determine their use, the landscape process and its outcomes will become increasingly significant. Therefore, I recommend that inquiries, regardless of their disciplinary bent, be grounded in a landscape. For
specifically spatial inquiries, I recommend contrasting multiple sites. These might include further inquires of the SSLUG Garden or novel inquires of the NAU/Flagstaff, Arizona landscape and beyond. I also recommend that inquiries of the landscape process consider the temporal changes in both the material landscape and the landscape process. As James Corner suggests in *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Theory*:

> Landscape is an ongoing medium of exchange, a medium that is embedded and evolved within the imaginative and material practices of different societies at different times. Over time, landscapes accrue layers with every new representation and possibilities. (1999, p. 5)

The evolution of the landscape process gives context to contemporary understandings and engagements.

Additionally, I would enthusiastically recommend the use of situational analysis for investigating and analyzing the relationship between human communities and landscape. This methodological approach grounds inquiry in a situation. In other words, it focuses the analysis where and with whom the outcomes of the landscape process are located. Additionally, on-site and go-along qualitative methods are provocative, constructive and enjoyable means of data collection. Being in and walking through the SSLUG Garden lessened the formality of the interview process thereby cultivating a more hospitable space for sharing. Additionally, as Bergeron et al. found (2014), these methods resulted in bounded and located meanings. Finally, I pose three broad and related questions that I think could be valuable and interesting inquires in any landscape: To what extent has our propensity for relation with landscape (“I-Thou”) been acculturated into thin air? By what
means do we lose this propensity for relation? Furthermore, is this loss
differently experienced among peoples of the same and/or different culture
and/or society?

**To dialogue with landscape.** This short section might well be an
epilogue but it follows naturally from the preceding sections. It is an exercise
in imagining my continued engagement with this topic. The reader, if
uninterested, may wish to skip ahead to the next and concluding section.

To begin, I do not intend to move back to Harrison County, Ohio.
Unfortunately, I suspect that any dialogue with landscape in challenge to
hydraulic fracturing there will be nullified by the intensity of the dialogue with
landscape in support of hydraulic fracturing. I’m uncertain where I will root
my life but I will. While it is commonly held that sensitivity to or critical
consciousness of a landscape can diminish with time (it becomes old hat), I
believe dialogue with landscape is eternal; we are interminably shaping and
being shaped by our environment (Soja, 2010). We must, therefore, maintain
a critical gaze upon our relationship with landscape and place.

I’m imagining that I’ll soon be rooted in a Midwestern or Appalachian
community. The Midwest is confronted with reimagining a landscape abused
and abandoned by industrialism. Appalachia is confronted with reimagining
a landscape still under the abuses of resource extraction. In either landscape,
I will continue to wonder and ask how we can cultivate greater reciprocity
between people and place. I imagine I will heed my own recommendations to
the NAU community by working to explicitly educate or guide more reciprocal
relationships with landscape while also seeking opportunities to implicitly design and organize spatial experiences to allow for that reciprocity. I imagine that the most provocative and meaningful ways of going about this involve reassembling a fragmented landscape (private/public, dumpster/garden, sewer/river). A landscape “of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down” (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). If we can accept sharing a public park, perhaps we can accept sharing a kitchen. If we cannot accept mining in the Grand Canyon, perhaps we should not accept hydraulic fracturing in Harrison County, Ohio. No doubt, these are challenging turns of logic but, for me, totally necessary. I conclude that Buber’s “I-Thou” communication with landscape (or at least more of this type of communication) might enable such turns of logic. By becoming “bound up” (Buber, 1937) in the Harrison County landscape, I understand and engage it with the same inviolability as many understand and engage the Grand Canyon.

**In Summary**

The *process* of landscape is of critical importance because its outcomes are always located, affecting human communities, broader ecological communities and the landscape itself. The results of this inquiry suggest that, for 13 members of the NAU community, understanding of and engagement with the SSLUG Garden is contingent on sociocultural positions. However, these results also suggest that the sociocultural contingency of landscape understanding and engagement dissipates during local and specific relation
with landscape (eg “go-along” interviews). From my review of Buber and my evaluation of dialogue between the NAU community and the SSLUG Garden, it seems that sociocultural contingency can dissipate during immediate local and specific experiences in the SSLUG Garden, thereby promoting more reciprocal dialogue with landscape. As Buber plainly demands, “Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of the relation: relation is mutual” (1937, p. 8). Research participants seemed most “bound up in relation” with the SSLUG Garden as they shared their immediate and local experience.

Because neither the landscape process nor its outcomes are inherent, we must begin to call into question our relationships with landscapes both local and global and those who dwell there. “To think better, to think like the best humans, we are probably going to have to learn again to judge a person’s [and a community’s] intelligence [...] by the good order or harmoniousness of his or her surroundings” (Berry, 2002, pp. 192-193).
References


Berry, W., & Wirzba, N. (2002). *The art of the commonplace: Agrarian


Essays.


Appendix A: Data Collection and Results

Interview Prompts

1. Please tell me about your relationship with the SSLUG Garden.
2. What are some memorable experiences you’ve had in relationship to the SSLUG Garden?
3. Let's pause and take one minute to observe and reflect. What did you observe?
4. Have you or do you meet with others in the SSLUG Garden? What is the cause of this meeting?
5. In what ways does the SSLUG Garden or your experiences in the SSLUG Garden affect or influence you (either positively or negatively / either consciously or subconsciously)?

Illustration Prompt

I requested that research participants illustrate the SSLUG Garden, taking as much time and using whichever materials they wish. I asked each research participant to complete and bring their drawing to our scheduled interview. Alternatively, if research participants could not or prefered not to complete their drawing before interview, I supplied a blank sheet of paper (white, 8.5" x 11"), black pen and a collection of colored pencils the day of the interview.
Improvements to the SSULG landscape

Prompt: Locate/describe enhancements made to the SSULG Garden: Describe/enhancements not afforded by the SSULG Garden: Imagen

Guiding Question: What enhancements does the SSULG Garden Landscape make valuable or effort to the community?

Group Members: I.

03/13/14 Charlene | SSULG Garden Focus Group
Appendix B: Analysis

Social Worlds / Arenas Map

Positional Map Exploration
Positional Map Pathways