Report

"Forms of thinking and spirituality in some places and traditional cultures around the world"

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Introduction

If landscape and all within it – the cultural structures and the buildings – do not belong to somebody, nobody cares. If landscape belongs to individuals only, with the attitude of no responsibility to the whole system, the system will collapse. If landscape belongs to everybody, to a community, which takes responsibility for a long period, over the generations?

What is easier to handle, the property of a community or an individual property? As members of a community, do people care for landscape, for an environment that does not belong to them? And if yes, why? There are astonishing examples throughout history, some of which will be presented here.

Autumn forest in fog, © Bigstock: denbelitsky

1. Waldviertel region in Austria

Strip corridors in Siebenlinden (Schweiggers/Bez. Zwettl NÖ), Austria
© Bernhard Baumgartner Wandertipp

In the northern region of Austria exist the so-called *Streifenfluren*, meaning *strip corridors*, for farming. Their origin goes back to the XIIth century, when this area was cultivated for the first time. The former jungle-woodland was cut down, and the farmland was divided into strips of similar size and fertility, in order that each farmer had similar production conditions.

The landscape itself is hilly, with steep slopes up to 1,000 m above sea level, and most of the soil contains more stones than fertile components. In order to prevent erosion, people created terraces, building embankments, using the stones they put aside from the fields. The first result indeed was that the fields became more flat and fertile. The second result, as a side effect, is still to be admired. The embankments became home to a much greater diversity of plants and animals than there had been before cultivation. The farmers did not use these embankments as farmland. They only cut down some trees from time to time, or burned down the bushes, in order to avoid too much shadow falling across the fields, or they used goats to keep the bushes at a low level. In this system, about 5% of the farmland was characterised by extensive methods of land use. But, similar to the rice terraces in Asia, the strip corridors did well, as long as farming was a matter of work done mainly by manpower and with the help of animals.

The basic idea of the strip corridor was led by the intention to gain a survival advantage for the whole community. If all the different farmland areas were divided into strips of equal size and quality, all the farmers of a local community would have the same production conditions ranging from worst possible to best possible. The danger for an individual farmer of having a total loss of crop in a bad year was minimised. Every farmer had the chance of a good harvest in at least one of his strips. Working together, very close to their neighbourhood, the villagers maintained communication and a social bond. The diversity of crop in one area was much greater than in monoculture. The chance of stabilising a fertile eco-system was an important side effect. This heritage is now under great pressure. Forestry and intensive agriculture, combined with the use of big machinery, often demonstrate the intention to profit-maximise at all costs.

2. Songlines in Australia

Uluru / Ayers Rock, Australia

The Songlines, or dreaming tracks, of the Aborigines cross the whole continent of Australia. The result resembles an invisible mythical road map. Studies of Aboriginal people's DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) date their origin back more than 40,000 years. In their own history, as they themselves are able to read their songline-map and still do locate their paintings at holy sites, they tell about events ranging back long before the end of the Ice Age. The songlines have been created by so called Creation ancestors, travelling around and singing on their journey. Specific songs gave names towards Creation. Thus the landscape, the animals and the law for human society came into existence along the songlines.

Aborigines use all their spiritual power to keep creation as it is. The land did not exist before it was sung for the first time. Even today, it is of vital interest for creation to be sung, and therefore the old songs are still known. If a song is lost because people forget it, the land will die, it will be a dead land again. Aborigines consider that creation, as made by the ancestors, is perfect, nothing can be improved, nothing must be added. However, some civilisations try to adapt the world to their own way of thinking.

The songlines of a tribe have been passed on since the time of creation. Sometimes a song was handed over to the neighbourhood, to a nearby tribe where the next chapter was written. Passing the song on in perfect form to the next generation was an obligation to the custodians. People were able to learn the entire cultural story, and thus the songlines defined groups and responsibilities. Most surprisingly, a songline also defines the land they lived on, and the ceremonies and the obligations they had in respect of their country.

There were in the past several hundred language groups in Australia. The weaving of all these songlines, belonging to the different language groups that criss-cross Australia, create a kind of cultural network that ties all the language groups together. Various clan groups extended across the land and were linked by networks of songs, containing aspects of cultural heritage, mythology and identity.

According to this culture all the words for “land” in their language are identical to the word “line”. To “own land” was considered owning a part of a songline that was inherited by the ancestors and that wound throughout the country.

Aborigines had to be able to move because the landscape was not fertile enough all the time. In case of emergency, moving was equal to survival. The word for “own land” was similar to “the place where I don’t have to ask”. Wandering along the defined songlines was combined with obligated trading with tribes in the neighbourhood, to get and give supply. This trade was symmetrical and non-profit. Goods in general were seen as harmful, unless they were in constant motion. To possess goods, in this tradition, is seen as adhesion. Goods cling to the soul and command behaviour. Aborigines liked to exchange even goods that had no real value. This was an opportunity to meet other people, to communicate, to exchange information, to sing, to dance, to marry, to share treasures and define “borders”.

3. Ise in Japan

The iconic gate of the Shinto Shrine, Japan, 2017
© Bigstock: leodaphne

In Japan, the Shinto religion engendered a tradition of preservation, transformation and the renewal of buildings and the landscape around Ise, starting in the VIIth century. Some 125 buildings, made of wood, are renewed every 20 years. An exact copy of the old building is erected nearby, and when it is finished the old one is broken down, the wood itself preserved for the next cycle of rebuilding.

The same techniques of craftsmanship are practised every 20 years, and the tradition has to be handed down from one generation to the next without a break, otherwise it is lost. This idea of preserving and renovating has had a deep influence in Japanese architecture and on the way tradition and modernism go side by side, right up to the present day. For example, it is possible to wear a kimono together with a tie and a modern jacket. Something like this would be *faux pas* in other traditions. Of course, Ise is a very special place: it belongs to the tradition of Shinto and Japanese imperial history. This Ise-tradition is a very strong bond that ties a community together and creates responsibility.

One principle in particular unites the followers of the Shinto religion: purification and renewal. Water is very important for gaining purity of body, clothing, habitation and the soul (a pure heart). The shrine itself is a symbol of the transience of life. The renewal of the shrine emboldens the humans to do the same with courage: slowing down, cleaning, freeing the spirit of the past and starting again, in balance with the gods and nature.

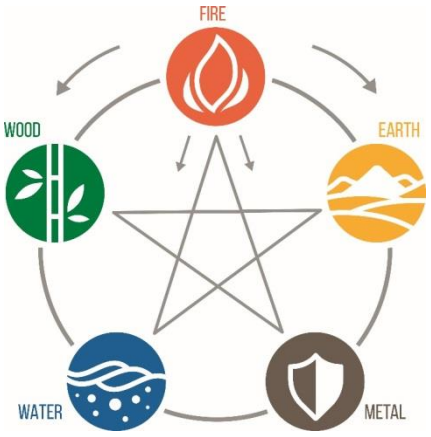
The Shinto religion defines 8 million gods (Kami) living in very special places, all beautiful spots in nature. They show themselves as humans, animals, plants, mountains: they may be present in the wind, the rain, thunder, the lightning flash. Our surroundings, nature and natural phenomena are alive, and therefore this nature receives respect and worship.

Yoshihiro Narisawa, born 1969, is a famous Japanese chef who built his fame on promoting organic and natural ingredients as a part of Japanese cuisine. He describes his approach as follows: "Our environment is developing in a disappointing direction; the producers have to promote a sustainable food chain. I want to make an important contribution to give a chance for a sustainable food supply even 40 or 50 years ahead… People stopped going into the forests to collect wild herbs. We use these herbs in our restaurant, and so we bring the people back to the woods. This knowledge is handed down to the next generation, and they know again what is good for eating and what is poisonous. The connection of the Japanese people to nature is very special. They define nature as a co-existing partner (at the same level). This kind of thinking is deeply grounded in Japan and, at this point, Japan is very special and spiritual."

Red Torii gate at Kakigara-Inari Shrine in Hase-dera Temple garden, Kamakura, Japan, 2017. © Bigstock: bennymarty

4. The five elements in traditional Chinese culture

Five elements, or manifestations of energy, describe the world in the old Chinese daoist philosophy. It is also known as the system of five transformation phases for describing nature. To understand the basic idea we have to know that the elements are always arranged in a circle, going round in either direction: the system will always come back to the starting point.



The five elements

The first circle is clockwise. There is ***wood*** first: wood will burn. ***Fire*** is the second: fire will burn down. ***Earth*** is the third: earth will create ores within it. ***Metal*** is the fourth: metal provides water with trace elements, indeed brings life towards water. ***Water*** is the fifth element. Water enlivens the plants, wood grows again and the cycle proceeds. This is the most logical circle for arranging these five elements, the easiest to understand. It is called the "food circle", as mother to child.

Reversing this circle, reading it anti-clockwise, shows the "weakening circle": wood inhales water; water corrodes metal; metal takes minerals out of the earth; earth takes the air away from fire; fire burns wood.

Looking clockwise, the same direction as in the food circle, but jumping from wood to earth, from earth to water, from water to fire, from fire to metal, from metal to wood again, this is described as the *controlling circle.* Each element takes control of one of the group of five. Wood and plants take nutrients out of the earth and roots keep the earth together; earth controls the flow of water; water extinguishes fire; fire melts metal; metal splits wood. None of the group should have too much or too little space. As a living organism, the group needs all elements in balance, and in motion.

Changing the direction again and jumping from wood to metal; from metal to fire; fire to water; water to earth and from earth to wood again, this is called the "circle of destruction". Wood takes the sharpness from metal; metal takes the heat from fire; fire vaporises water; water erodes earth; earth suffocates wood.

These five elements may also be seen in the projection of dimensions in the outer world. There are: five dimensions in space orientation; five different taste directions; five seasons of the year; five kinds of weather; five vocalisations; five emotions; projected upon the human body we find five

pairs of organs, for example the liver and the gallbladder connected to wood, and the heart and the small intestine connected to fire.

Advantages and challenges of the use of wood in landscapes

If men did not interfere, all the landscape would revert back to woodland, as it had been since the end of the Ice Age. This is a picture that, at least in Europe, could become reality within a short time – within the lifespan of a human being. In this way, it might seem threatening to many people, as it was for thousands of years. The dark, impenetrable jungle, full of wild, unknown creatures, was a major obstacle holding back agriculture in Europe since the Middle Ages.

Woodland was a kind of *bank account* until the middle of the XXth century. Trees were seen as something to fall back on, when times were hard. They could use the wood for producing furniture or as a building material, or they could sell some trees to earn money, but only in cases of emergency. Some trees became quite old that way: fir trees for instance, or spruce trees, which grow very well in the alpine region, stood for 200 years or more, about 5-6 generations of farmers. The lifespan is about 600 years for fir trees and 300 years for spruce trees. They grow fairly fast in youth, the first 30 to 40 years, and then slow down.

Modern forestry management has led to the maximisation of profit in forestry. The spruce in particular has become the "bread tree", a high-yield tree, grown in monoculture, and harvested at an age of 40 years, on average.

Trees became the "cash cows" of the forests. When farmers argue that it is necessary to cut down the old trees to give way for more growth of younger ones, the result is that there are no "grown-ups" any more in such a system.

Trees are said to be among the oldest living creatures in the world. *Pando* is a clone colony in Utah, United States of America, and a root-system where clonal trees emerge. All in all, there are 47,000 single trees growing together with a single root system and a collective weight of over 6,000 tons. The system is more than 80,000 years old, thus the oldest and heaviest living creature on earth. The oldest single spruce-clone in Norway is about 10,000 years old. One durable pine in the United States of America is about 5,062 years old, and thus, the oldest non-clonal tree in the world.

Farmers often forget that they are dealing with living structures that could play an important role in an eco-system for many, many years, if they are not interfered with. It is necessary to understand that humans are only an equal part of this eco-system, not a superior one. Human responsibility, however, is major. We have the tools to destroy within minutes what has grown for thousands of years.

An antithesis to this development has been the traditional veneration of trees for thousands of years until this age, practised by numerous nations all over the world. Starting from Mesopotamian culture, through Indian, Greek, Celtic, Jewish and Roman rites, we find all shades of religious bond towards trees.

Mythological creatures lived amongst the trees, but also different ways of socially-controlling structures were connected with trees. Court was held under a lime tree in the Middle Ages. Even

today, dancing is practised between special lime trees in various countries, cut and grown for decades in a specific way.

In the balance of the five elements, wood controls earth. Cutting all the trees down, not only in the tropical rainforests, brings erosion of the earth and the end of fertility. Metal controls wood; wood itself gives nutrition to fire, as the fire itself is a basic nutrition for earth.

Advantages and challenges of the use of fire and light in landscapes

The famous author Bruce Chatwin described the advantages of controlling fire in the early days of mankind by focusing on the threats of the night. He pointed out that the humans had to be wary of the night and the absolute darkness, without artificial light, before they acquired the skill of controlling fire. The big cats, such as lions in the savannah, looked for prey, and human beings were just the right size for them. Looking for shelter by climbing a tree was one way to escape, hiding in caves another. However, wild animals such as bears inside the caves presented another deadly danger.

Controlling fire changed everything, but this was only possible because mankind acted as a strong community. *Keeping the fire burning* was always a task of great responsibility and vital interest. Maybe this is the reason why, even today, almost all human beings like to relax and allow themselves to dream in front of an open fire.

Fire was used for cooking meals and the soft food allowed man to evolve smaller jawbones, which gave room for bigger brains, along with the improved nutritional value of the food itself. Fire allowed man to control not only the deadly danger of the big cats and bears: it was the first step to transforming landscape. Burning down the wood was not an accident any more, it was done by will. Controlling fire was the first step in using the strongest yang part of energy in the evolution of mankind. Nature, and landscape, without control of it, was primarily a threat. Fire meant light, and this kind of light was quite precious and not available all the time, all the night, at any place.

The invention of electricity and the resultant light emission of the last 50 years have brought about the complete disappearance of darkness in extensive areas of the world, and not just in big cities.

Light emission is yang dominance in a disastrous way. Light sources work as vacuum cleaners in the night for insects, and they destroy the balance in wildlife. Darkness is vital for regeneration for humans also. Black night is pure Yin, the female opposite of the day, and it brings coolness, peace and tranquillity. So it provides safety in a certain way too, though many people want to light all parts of the environment, in the hope of getting more security. Many people in huge cities, even as adults, have never seen the stars and the Milky Way. They fly over to New Zealand to get the experience for the first time in their lives of a dark sky with stars.

Darkness means dreaming and secrets. There is the world-famous song, *The sound of silence*, written and performed by Simon & Garfunkel, and it starts as follows:

Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

It is imagination and inspiration that we need, and this comes out of darkness too, out of nowhere. Landscape as a dark place, and thus unknown and unpredictable, has no value in economic terms. It is a treasure that has hidden secrets. People are very eager to discover them, searching desperately. The more light emission there is worldwide, the more people have to travel long distances to get into the dark areas, and in doing so they switch on the lights during their journey. Of course, these journeys are not only happening to search for dark places. People are looking, in general, for beauty in landscape that is untouched by civilisation. People want to be the only ones there, in silence and solitude, especially when on vacation. Tourist information guides promise access to the last untouched places by using labels such as *Lonely Planet*. Insider tips attract investors sooner or later. If people continue to look for a so-called "secret place" after a few years there will be a well-organised tourist infrastructure there.

The change is made for easy understanding and for quick access to the previously hidden treasure, measuring the value in significant sums of money. The last untouched landscapes will have to have controlled access in the future, as do some national parks already. Not everybody will be able to afford the entrance fee. The fewer secrets that are left, the more expensive they are. The last Siberian tiger will be the most precious one.

In the balance of the five elements, fire controls metal. It melts the metal, for a new transformation, for the future. Water controls fire; fire itself gives nutrition to earth, as earth is a basic nutrition to metal.

Advantages and challenges of the use of earth in landscapes

"But a meadow reaches down directly to the centre of the earth!" This is a remark by Carlo Scarpa, an Italian architect living 1906-1978. He was famous for his appreciation of nature, and his great affection of Japanese architecture and horticulture.

When delivering a lecture about architecture in Vienna in the Seventies, he was forced to defend a residential project he had designed, with subterranean garages under the building. He did not intend to use the space underneath the green area between the building blocks. This variant would have made the project much cheaper and it could have been realised much more quickly than his design. Confronted with the question of why he had not used the space underneath the meadow, initially he did not understand the advantage of such an approach, but after a while he made this remark, in the very emotional outburst quoted above.

He was right, there is a centre of the earth, and sometimes we need to be reminded of this truth, because we are connected to this centre too. With our feet on the ground, hopefully without shoes, we feel the difference between a freeway downwards, and whether a concrete parking garage under the green grass is blocking the connection. If some of us should have lost this ability, for sure the plants at ground level and the trees will notice the difference.

What comes up immediately, when thinking about this connection below ground, is again the aspect of ownership. Who decides about the right to own a specific part of the earth? As long as humans were wandering around as nomads, property was of no importance in the term of land ownership, above or below the ground.

The word *nomad* goes back to the ancient Greek *nomás*, which means: grazing livestock and wandering around with them. People who are wandering around with grazing animals, or who just go hunting or fishing, do not use fences or define fixed borders. They do not exploit the landscape in any way: their idea is to move along when sustainable biomass is no longer available.

We like to define so-called "early advanced cultures", as having been recorded along the Indus, in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, probably dating back to the Ice Age. They have all now gone. Some of the "primitive nomad cultures", such as the Aborigines in Australia, survived for tens of thousands of years, until our present "western civilisation" eroded the last remnants of them in the XXth century and forced the last nomads to settle down. The word "settle" has its origin in to "stick" to something. The same moment you settle down, you define your property within borders, and you defend it, because you need the resources to be secured, right where you stay.

Even today there is the idea of "staking a claim" when it comes to digging for minerals above or below ground. People such as Carlo Scarpa acted as architects above the ground, but with a deeply rooted responsibility for nature and landscape. Perhaps he knew about a principle the Aborigines have always tried to take into account:

> *The less you take away from the earth, the less you have to give back afterwards. The balance has to be held.*

Mountain areas, such as the Alps, offer winter sport possibilities. They typically have a high density of buildings which provide climbing assistance, such as cableways and chairlifts. Combined with these massive constructions interfering in the former wild landscape, there is a change of terrain surface, which is necessary to guarantee perfect slopes for winter tourism. With tourists in the mountains, security becomes a huge challenge.

To avoid avalanches, artificial barriers are essential. To produce artificial snow, snow cannons are needed, and therefore water basins have to be built and electricity cables need to be fixed. All this intervention appears to be a war against the elements. Some people, such as the famous Austrian author Felix Mitterer (born 1948), who grew up under poor circumstances in Tirol, speak of a *strike back* against the mountains.

For thousands of years the mountains were a deadly threat to nearby inhabitants and travellers alike. The farmers and the miners always stood on the edge of starvation, and they had a tough fight to survive – until tourism, especially in the years after World War Two, which brought a turnaround.

In recent years, however, people in the mountains have invested not only in infrastructure to bring forward tourism but for their comfort too. Some mountains were cut deep into the surface and thousands of tons of concrete were injected, to stop the danger of the dynamic, ever-changing system of nature

Environmentalists, archaeologists and specialists of other disciplines have a similar view towards protection in the long term, thinking of generations yet to come, and preserving the treasures for them.

It is necessary to develop a permanent and productive public discussion about defining a bigger value for us, as the community of mankind, to protect certain vital landscape areas from being destroyed by profit maximisation.

In the balance of the five elements, earth is controlling water. It holds back the water for a controlled downward flow. Wood controls earth, earth itself gives nutrition to metal, as metal is a basic nutrition to water.

Advantages and challenges of the use of metal in landscapes

All kinds of metal, not only noble metals such as gold and silver but also iron and steel, have always been very precious. When humans started working the earth with tools, when settlements and agriculture followed nomadism, iron became indispensable. From that time on, it has also been used as a weapon for war, for securing newly-defined borders, and for protecting property.

A great deal of energy has to be invested to get more out of the earth. Those places where iron ore is difficult to reach have been very sought after, even at the risk of life. In Europe, the Alps for instance have always been inhospitable for humans. Particularly in medieval times, all kinds of metal, in huge quantities, were dug out by legions of miners under harsh conditions, bringing wealth to a small, privileged group.

Sometimes iron fell from heaven in the form of a meteorite. Very probably, the famous steel of the Noriker, a tribe belonging to the Celts in Austria and Southern Germany, from about 200 BC. was forged by ore from a huge meteorite which fell from heaven in the year 465 BC.

The quality of the steel *ferrum Noricum*, forged by the Noriker, was so extraordinarily high that the Romans made this tribe a respected trading partner and did not subjugate them. The weapons made of this superior steel would have been an important cornerstone for the military dominance of the Roman Empire which was one of the most advanced cultures ever.

The improvement of the steam engine by James Watt in 1769 was the biggest milestone of this age. The effect of the Industrial Revolution for mankind was similar in importance to the Neolithic change from nomadism to being settled. Radical changes in technology, productivity and science brought social upheaval.

Absolutely new to history is the impact of this revolution, with the help of steel, on landscapes all over the continents. Mining was suddenly possible in vast dimensions and, along with this, fossil energy sources such as oil and coal could be used in a new dimension. The building of the railways

first, and roads for individual car traffic later, cut deep into the floating system of nature, which relies on exchange of the elements and animals alike.

Use of a dense material such as metal has, in practice, always oscillated in history between responsibility and misuse, but the Industrial Revolution was an absolute turning point towards imbalance. The weakening (anticlockwise) circle of the five elements describes the result of the domination of metal as the weakening of earth. Iron takes the minerals out of the earth. The trigrams, always three lines, one above the other, show earth as three yin lines. Yin is the female element and three yin lines symbolise permeability and a high state of receptiveness and helpfulness. In the five vocalisations, earth symbolises singing.

The trigrams show iron as three yang lines, one above the other. Yang is the male element, and three yang lines also symbolise heaven, brightness, creativity and egoism. In the five vocalisations, metal symbolises weeping. If there ever was an age of yang domination regarding speed it is the current age. Never has any advanced culture been capable of such speed in communication and transportation.

It appears that metal needs to be controlled more than all the other elements. Fire is the element that controls metal. The trigrams show fire as two yang lines outside and one yin line inside. Fire is hot, seen from all sides, but the yin is seen inside, within the glow. In the five vocalisations, fire is laughing. It is also connected to joy in the five emotions, as metal is connected to grief and sorrow.

In the balance of the five elements, metal is controlling wood. An axe is splitting a tree. Fire controls metal, metal itself gives nutrition to water, as water is a basic nutrition to wood.

Advantages and challenges of the use of water in landscapes

Water is a source of life, as important as the light and fire of the sun, and the warmth that comes from fossil energy. Because water is indispensable and people enjoy many of its products, such as fish, settlements have always been established near the rivers and by the sea. Water, as long as it was uncontrolled, was a threat and a pleasure the same time. Floating, and when in motion as it shows itself as a river, one could never predict the next flood and the devastation coming with it. Crossing big rivers and using them as a trading route by building ships was a giant leap for mankind as important as the use of fire. Humans had no tools for changing the natural flow of big rivers up to the XXth century. The need to produce large amounts of electricity, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, generated the idea to build huge hydro-electric power plants.

The first advantages were striking, almost as it was intended, as a win-win situation. Getting the electrical energy came along with a safe waterway for ships and trading. Much more, it was thought that the ever-changing riverbanks would be secured for ever, and a new approach was possible to establish settlements along the river. We realise now that the efforts to hold control will soon overcome the benefits of bounding the water. This element is strongest in its softness. Moreover, there is truth in a proverb in old times: Water has a small head! If we bind and inhibit the flow of water, we also reduce the vital quality of it, and, in combination with destroying the sources and the landscape where the rivers come from, we reduce the amount of water itself. Water is showing itself a deadly danger again, because it is rushing downhill without limits, just as natural rivers have always built their own paths by meandering freely.

On the other hand, there will be no reserves left because of a radical erasing of virgin forests and the melting of glaciers on the mountains. The Danube, for example, was free-flowing in the XIXth century. The quantity of excellent fish taken out of it every day was extraordinarily high, and this made it a cheap food. Poor servants, working for the upper class, complained about having to eat fish every day, and a special law guaranteed them the right to not have fish more than three times a week.

What a loss for us today, what an artificial undertaking to get back such a quality food. What an effort to renaturalise the riverbanks, at least along small rivers. The River Nile in Egypt, that has brought water and nutrients to people for thousands of years, has been stopped by a dam for a hydro-electric power plant that was finished in 1976. Fertility, in the form of mud and fish in the river estuary, has gone, and it has now to be replaced by artificial nutrients. In the longer term, the whole dammed river course will be filled with river mud, and thus the efficiency of the power plant will be lost and cannot be restored.

The advantages of such projects have never overruled the disadvantages and they can never do so if we look at the "Ecological footprint".

In the balance of the five elements, water is controlling fire. Earth controls water, water itself gives nutrition to wood, as wood is a basic nutrition to fire.

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The eight trigrams

There are eight trigrams, each one formed by three lines, based on the system of yin and yang, and connecting the five elements. This is the basis for understanding the concept of *Feng Shui*, a way of bringing elements into balance, inside a house, a garden or in the open landscape.

Every part in nature is in permanent motion, because it is a living system. It is always a process of birth, transformation and dying, connected to all other elements in a system of helping and controlling each other, thus bringing responsibility to the whole system. We also find this idea in the system of *shiatsu*, *taichi chuan*, acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine.

Conclusion

In his speech at the American University, Washington, D.C., on 10 June 1963, John F. Kennedy said: "We all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's futures. And we are all mortal."

In order to promote a careful attitude to the quality of the landscape, an "ethic of responsibility" the general public should be informed, showing examples of good practice. If people do not know about the beauty of the Milky Way at night they do not care for it. There is reason to praise the beauty of a secular tree and to contemplate it. Searching for treasures such as these takes time. Speed is the biggest barrier to a slow approach towards the beauty of nature and of the landscape. Fire controls speed. Fire within the hearts, without light emissions, goes along with laughter and joy.

This ethic of responsibility could be a very joyful one.

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