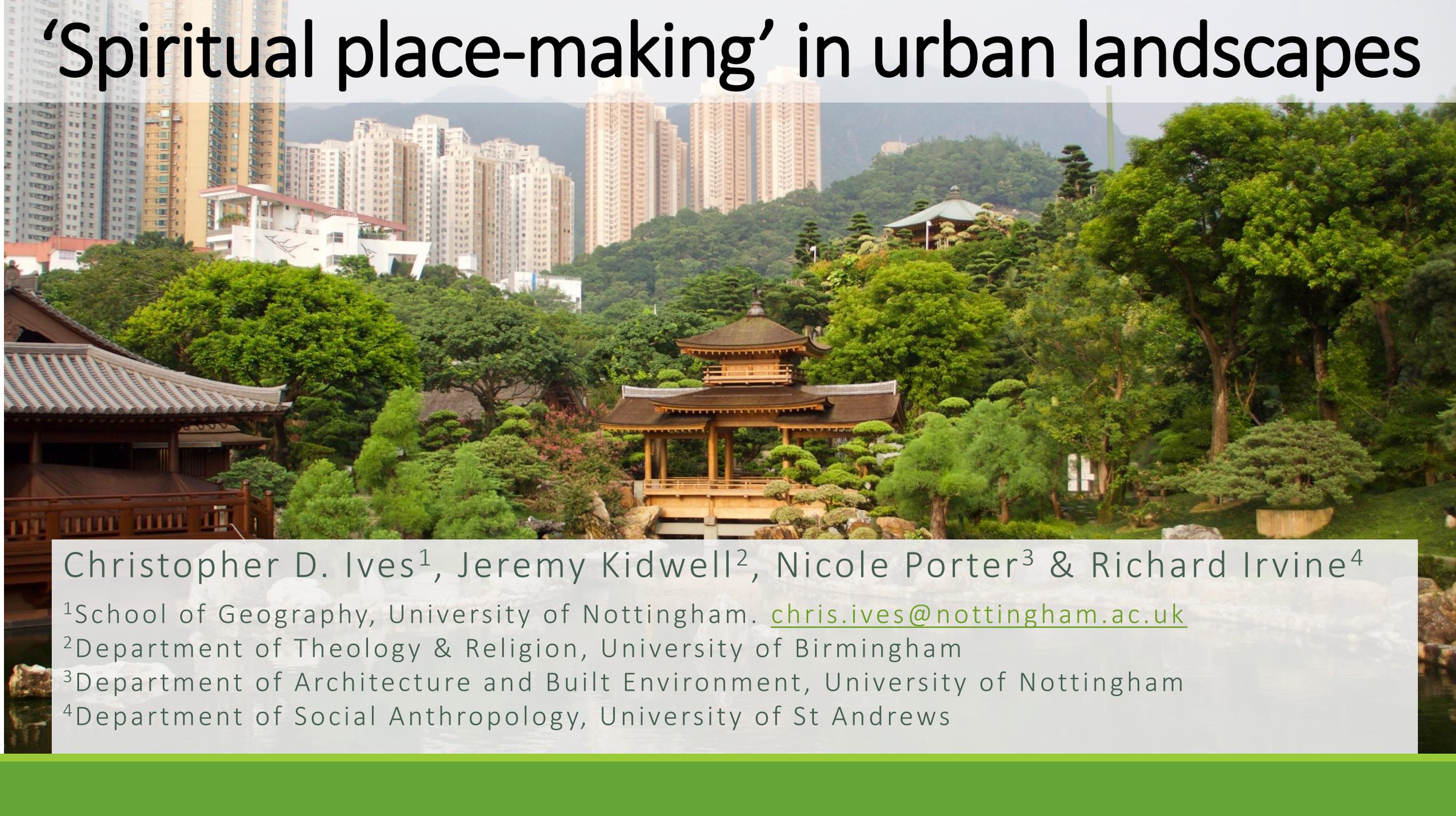


'Spiritual place-making' in urban landscapes

A photograph showing a traditional Chinese garden with a wooden pavilion in the foreground, surrounded by lush green trees. In the background, a modern high-rise apartment complex is visible, illustrating the contrast between traditional and modern urban landscapes.

Christopher D. Ives¹, Jeremy Kidwell², Nicole Porter³ & Richard Irvine⁴

¹School of Geography, University of Nottingham. chris.ives@nottingham.ac.uk

²Department of Theology & Religion, University of Birmingham

³Department of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Nottingham

⁴Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews

Spiritual values have received little attention

IPBES Summary Report (May 2019):

“Nature underpins quality of life by providing basic life support for humanity (regulating), as well as material goods (material) and spiritual inspiration (non-material) (well established) {2.3.1, 2.3.2}.”

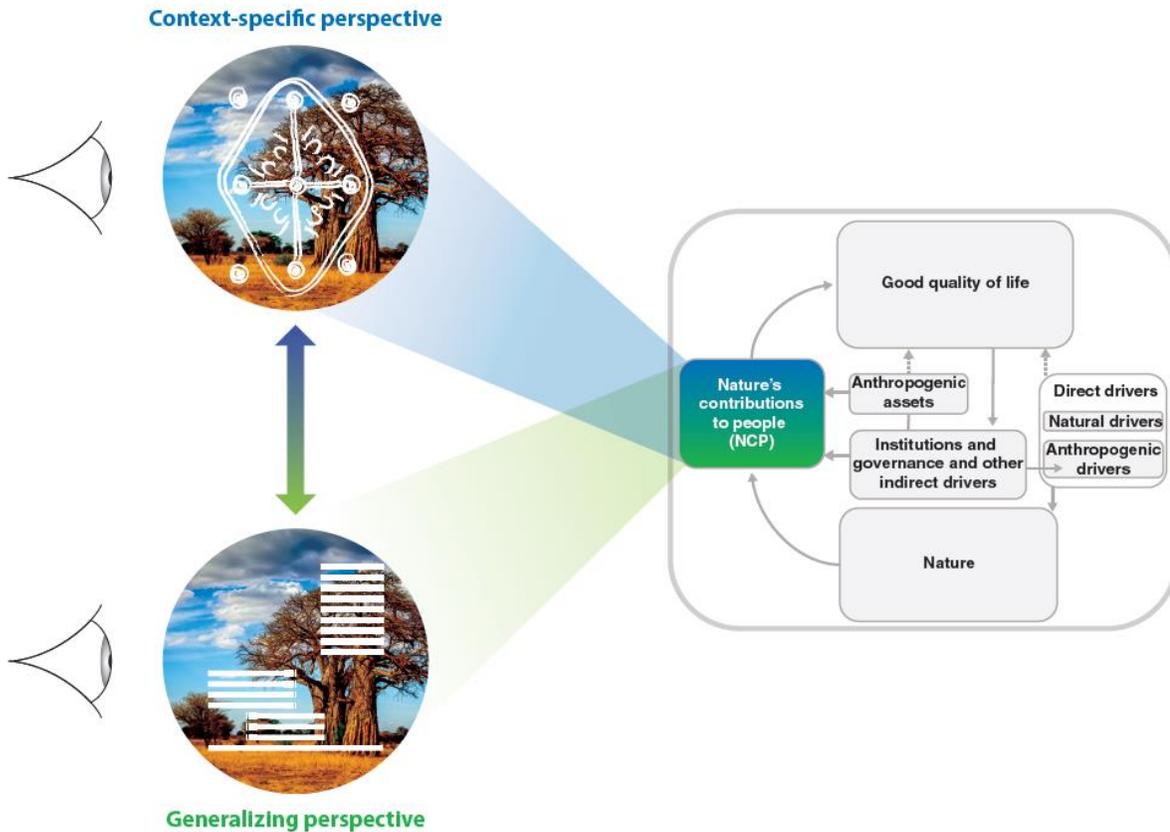
- **The concept of ‘Spiritual inspiration’ is not unpacked further.**
- **“Religion” received no mention.**

Scholars have recently called for greater research into **“human perception, values, and cultural traditions affecting the supply and demand of Ecosystem Services”**

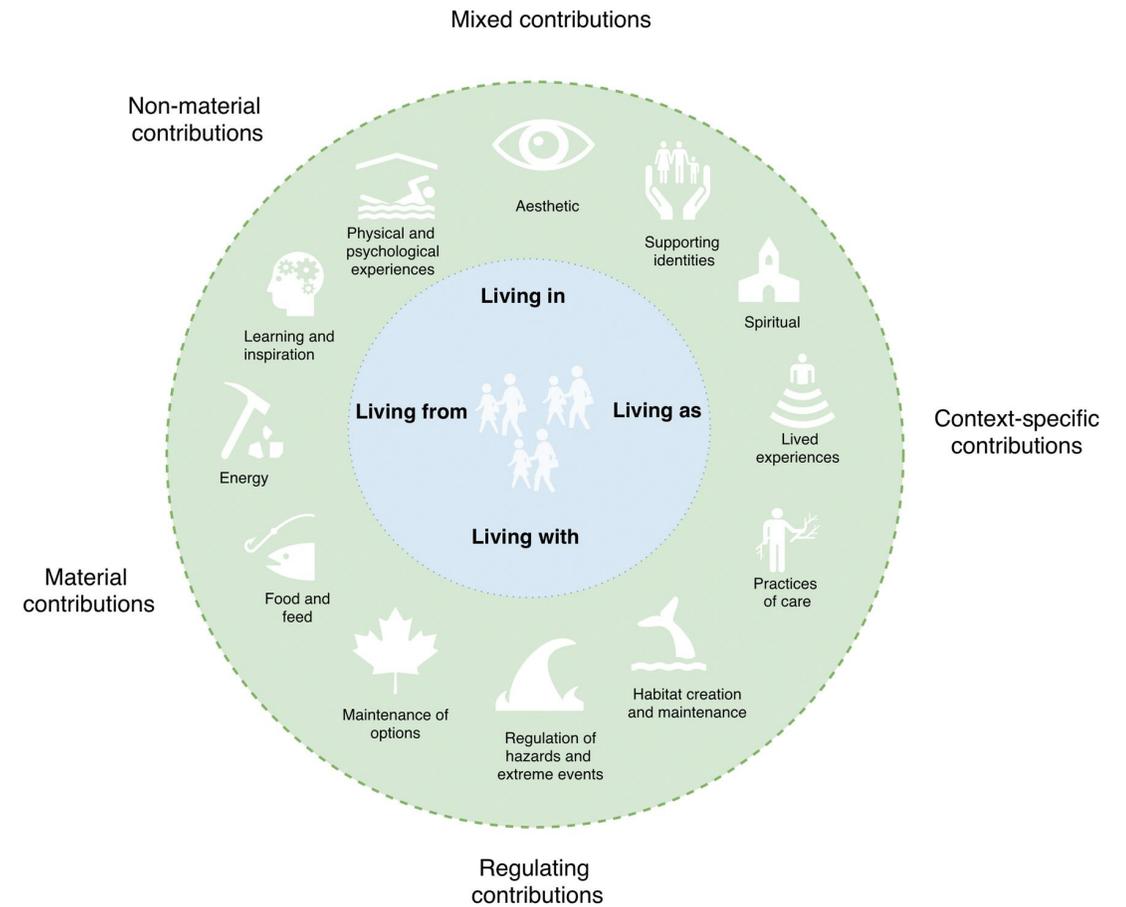
(McPhearson et al. 2015 *Ecosystem Services*, 12:152-156).

Existing conceptual frameworks

Nature's Contributions to People (IPBES)



Life Framework of Values



Research questions

1. How are cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, or religious values *perceived*, *conceptualised*, or *understood* in everyday urban environments?
2. What landscape features or socio-cultural influences shape the perception and expression of such values?
3. How can cultural, spiritual, aesthetic or religious values be categorised or operationalised for landscape decision-making?

There is a need for more empirically-grounded research.

Case Study: Black Patch Park, Smethwick



Geography

- Point of ecological confluence: meeting of watercourses
- 'in-between' place socially and administratively.
- Positioned on an administrative boundary

Planning and Design

- Site currently being considered as focal-point for urban renewal and investment.
- Recent Sandwell planning statement and masterplan.



Spiritual values: the great 'unknown'

Table 1.1 Annual Value of Ecosystem Services provided by Birmingham's Green Infrastructure

<i>Annual Values; 2011 Prices</i>		Woodland	Heathland	Wetland	BAP Priority Grassland	Total
Provisioning Services	Water Supply			£0.001m		£0.001m
	Wild Species Diversity	£0.25m	£0.19m	£0.10m	£0.03m	£0.56m
Cultural Services	Recreation	£1.42m	£0.65m	£0.10m	£0.10m	£10.05m
	Aesthetic Values & Sense of Place	£7.78m				
	Cultural Heritage & Spiritual Values					
Regulating Services	Flood Regulation	£0.76m	£0.10m	£0.10m	£0.01m	£0.98m
	Storm Buffering					
	Water Quality Regulation			£0.08m		£0.08m
Σ		£10.20m	£0.94m	£0.38m	£0.14m	£11.66m
Area of Habitat		1,528 ha	310 ha	199 ha	70 ha	2,107 ha
Average Value per Ha		£6,678	£3,034	£1,904	£2,005	£5,536
Notes: All values are 'best guess' estimates. Cells left blank can't be interpreted as 'no value', scientific evidence to date just doesn't allow to calculate a monetary value for these services. Not only because of that the real values may exceed the stated ones.						

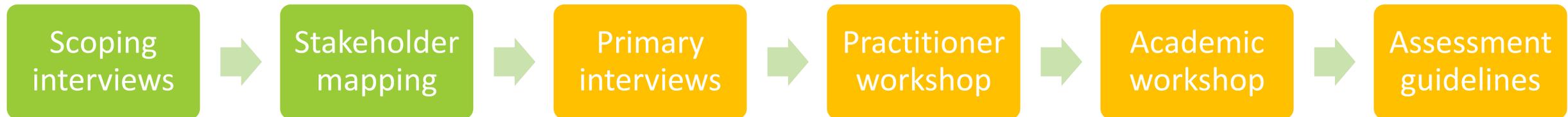
Signs of aesthetic, spiritual & cultural significance



*It's imperative to understand what was and what is
(spiritually) if we are to imagine what could be...*

Research Design

Diverse, interdisciplinary research team (geography, ethics, architecture, anthropology).



Preliminary findings

Themes

- *“It’s a very spiritual place [black patch park], but it is contested”*
- Spirituality is present, but not always formalised. Spiritual pluralism within groups (e.g. Friends of Black Patch Park)
- Natural features are identified as carrying spiritual significance (e.g. creeks).
- Some tension between planners and community members in how readily spiritual dimensions of this place are discussed.
- Combination of care & neglect.

Emerging Questions

- (without priming by researchers) do respondents consider the park to have 'spiritual' value(s)?
- Are there barriers to spirituality that need to be overcome in formal planning contexts?
- Degrees of comfort in articulating spirituality. What *fora* can provide space for this?

Thank you

Email: chris.ives@nottingham.ac.uk

Twitter: @DrChrisIves