

A Project entitled

Camping versus Glamping: The Postmaterial-Capitalist Shift from the Natural Landscape to the Leisure Landscape

Submitted by

WONG Lai Shun

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Declaration

I, *WONG Lai Shun* declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Dr HUI Lai Hang, Dennis*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed

Wong Lai Shun
21/04/2024

Table of Content

Abstract	P.4
1. Introduction	P.5
2. Literature Review	P.8
3. Methodology and results	P.24
4. Findings	P.28
5. Discussion	P.35
6. Conclusion and suggestions of future research	P.44
References	P.48

Abstract

Using camping and glamping activities as entry points, this study aims to study the shift of the natural landscape towards a leisure landscape under the discourse of postmaterialism, and construct a landscape for modern Hong Kong nature. 4 participant observation trips to camping and glamping sites were conducted in Hong Kong in 2024, and 8 participants were interviewed during the trips to understand their sense of place towards nature. This study found out that nature is highly integrated with leisure and material practices of glamping reinforced the sense of leisure in nature. The boundary between natural landscape and leisure landscape is also becoming less obvious. The importance of preserving the natural landscape is suggested at the end of the study, after studying the environmental and cultural practices of the two landscapes.

1. Introduction

Camping tourism, although with different levels of comfort and remoteness (Timothy & Teye, 2009, p.228), usually refers to an experience that involves living in temporary shelters like a tent, caravan, or recreational vehicle (RV) (Brooker and Joppe, 2013, p.1). It has remained one of the most popular recreational activities and a preferred kind of accommodation in the world, including in Hong Kong (Timothy & Teye, 2009, p.227). However, as the market of the camping industry grew larger and larger, different niche markets rose in the name of “camping”. Among them, glamping, which combines the words ‘glamorous’ and ‘camping’ (Adamovich et.al., 2021), is a solution for outdoor lovers who want both outdoor experiences and comfortable accommodation (Brochado & Pereira, 2017). Glamping sites offer various levels of comfort, style, and uniqueness, which led to their rise in North America, Europe, and Australia. Since then, research emerged to study its influence on the outdoor hospitality sector and further expand it by reviewing various terminologies that are used to describe glamping (Brooker & Joppe, 2013, p.1). Nevertheless, although academic research on camping has become more common in the Western world, it received little attention in Asian countries, let alone Hong Kong. Thus, studying its development in other parts of the world can help enrich its discussion in academia and make relevant theories applicable in other contexts.

This study also has a strong geographical implication as it involves the scales of time and

place. Hong Kong is known for its capitalist economy and it helped shape Hong Kong in multiple ways. Recently, discussions surrounding developments near nature or the development of nature have become more and more common in Hong Kong politics. For instance, we have a discussion surrounding building residential buildings near country parks and Lantau development. These proposals may lead to the exploitation of nature to generate economic revenue for the government. I believe it has to do with another wave of the discourse of a capitalist, commodity economy instead of sustainably building our city. As a result, by using camping and glamping activities as my focus, I can study whether this discourse is slowly encroaching on the leisure sector, and lead to the transformation of a natural landscape towards a leisure landscape. Using camping as an outdoor activity with a relatively long history and glamping as an outdoor activity with a relatively short history, my topic can provide a vision of the outdoor landscape in the scale of time. By studying whether commodification occurs in the outdoor leisure sector, I can project it into constructing a landscape for modern Hong Kong nature. It can provide insights into how the population reacts to the trend of an evolving landscape, and whether it will lead to a new direction in Hong Kong's natural resources management or even city development. To address the complexity of this study and achieve the study aims, the research questions shown below are used to help us better understand and study the correlation between different academic concepts.

Research questions:

1. To what extent can the emergence of glamping activity be considered a post-material alternative to the traditional camping activity?
2. In what ways does glamping transform the natural landscape into a leisure landscape in which hedonistic value is prioritized over aesthetic value which has been celebrated in the traditional practice of camping?
3. To what extent can the postmaterialism theory offer explanations for the spatial differences between glamping and camping?

2. Literature review

The construction of landscape originated from one's geographical imagination of a place, and that imagination is subject to many factors and discourses. To address the complexity of landscape, we must first understand the theoretical background of the key concepts related to landscape. As a result, this literature review focuses on explaining some of the key components that combine to form landscapes, including sense of place, the environment, economic activities, and ideologies. To construct a landscape of Hong Kong's modern nature, the above concepts would be put under the context of camping and glamping, which will then provide a solid framework for this study.

2.1 The construction of landscapes

Ocean Park Hong Kong, which is the metropolis's only home-grown theme park, has always had a special place among generations of Hong Kong citizens. Established in 1977, most citizens will associate the park with amusement rides and consumption experiences, just like one of its main competitors, Hong Kong Disneyland. Nevertheless, Ocean Park Hong Kong operated in a unique business model: incorporated as a nonprofit organization while adopting commercial principles. Its mission upholds educational services as important as providing recreational services. Through its marketing focus on educating visitors about the value and

diversity of nature, it has attracted a rising number of visitors and positive feedback (Yip & Yiu, 2019). Instead of remembering the rides, lots of visitors would remember their visits to the animal stars of the park: Giant Pandas, and penguins, as well as a large variety of maritime wildlife living in the Aquarium. When people visit the animals, they will also remember the conservation knowledge embedded in the exhibition halls. As a result, Ocean Park is also associated with the proximity of nature, under a pleasant environment. It is also associated as a place to learn, and as a center to promote conservation. Consumerism and conservation are two very different ideologies, yet they coexist in the construction of the amusement park. When combined with its long history, as well as its legal status provided by the government, more layers of social and institutional interaction could be found in the existence of Ocean Park Hong Kong. A gigantic complex that involves the interaction between different discourses was thereby formed. From merely a hill beside a coastline located in Wong Chuk Hang, the place has become a unique site in the hearts of Hong Kong citizens.

Certain criteria are needed to maintain Ocean Park in the ways it “should have been”. Yet sometimes it is very hard for someone to explain what those criteria should be. Thus, this created a tangible yet intangible imagination of a place that needs to fit certain discourses. In common terms, one may describe it as the sense of belonging, that the park needs to have certain practices, designs, or purposes that fit the expectations of citizens. In legal terms, it may be referred to the legal status that is granted to the park under ‘Ocean Park Corporation

Ordinance’, that development of the park is restricted under certain principles, for example, designated land uses. In the lexicon of geography, it is commonly known as the ‘sense of place’. According to Relph (1997), “Places are aspects of human life that carry with them all the hopes, accomplishments, ambiguities, and even horrors of existence. Sense of place ties all of us to our surroundings, and is a way for us to understand our surroundings” (p. 208). Sense of place can help us make sense of how individuals or a group of people imagine and construct a place. Yet it can differ from person to person and change according to time and the growth of individuals. It is very hard for a group of people to come to a consensus of a common and consistent sense of place. It also failed to address the influence of ideologies on individuals, as we could be sure that how people imagine a place is subject to their past experiences, beliefs, and values. A comprehensive construction of a place therefore can’t be resulted. To better address the limitations of ‘sense of place’, and to construct a place with attention to ideologies, power, history, and culture, a concept named ‘landscape’ was often used by geographers to address the complex interaction between men and place.

According to Mitchell (2010), landscape is both an outcome and the medium of social relations, both the result of and an input to specific relations of production and reproduction. In the temporary world, our social relations are surrounded by capitalism, which makes landscape a commodity. In the case of Ocean Park Hong Kong, its facility, brand, experience, and vision are sold to the consumers. The physical location only serves as a vast, which can

be utilized for production, exchange, and consumption (Mitchell, 2003). As a result, the built landscape of the amusement park is a means to satisfy certain needs. On the other hand, landscape is also an ideology, which signifies a specific way for us to look at the land (Mitchell, 2010). For instance, when the government is planning the future developmental plans for Ocean Park, it needs to consider what is ‘natural’ or ‘right’ in this particular place (Mitchell, 1994). It would be unnatural for the government to build a chemical factory near Ocean Park as the location is already been bounded by a certain “culture”, or in other words, landscape. Nevertheless, we must take into account that the landscape is progressive in nature and is always in the process of “becoming” (Schein, 1997). During the construction of a landscape, different discourses may dominate the landscape in different periods. If the government wants to transfer Ocean Park Hong Kong into a fully nonprofit organization, its looks and practices will be very different in the future. Thus, landscape is fluid in nature, and is subject to change under different variables, for instance, time. Other variables included ideas, ideals, institutions, regulation, preservation, as well as nature, habitat, or history behind the landscape (Schein, 1997). To name a particular landscape at the intersection of all these variables, the term “node” can be used (Schein, 1997). In other words, the present-day Ocean Park can be considered a node, and Ocean Park thirty years later is another completely new node.

2.2 Landscape, the Environment, and the Rise of Tourism

After understanding the construction of landscapes using an amusement park, we need to ask the question: Can the principles of landscape be applied to nature itself? Will human activities affect the landscape of the natural environment? Since culture is embedded during the construction of landscape, we should look beyond the physical properties of nature. Thus, the answer is yes. Blaschke (2006) reviewed the concepts of landscape and sustainable development and suggested a framework called “sustainable landscape”. This concept mainly concerns the long-term stability and resilience of the site of interest under varying biophysical parameters and fast-changing human-induced disturbance. A sustainable landscape is aimed at achieving a stable equilibrium between sustaining the physical landscape resources and ensuring the quality of life of the people living in the landscape (Blaschke, 2006).

To understand and construct a sustainable landscape, the environment itself, which are the ecosystem structures and functions must be studied in the process. Such functions are often referred to as “natural capital” or “the treasure of nature”. Gray and Gordon (2020) reviewed the concept of “ecosystem services” and attempted to categorize the abiotic ecosystem services into 25 “geosystem services”, including providing food and nutrients to sustain wildlife under the “provisioning” category and opportunities for geo-tourism and leisure under the “cultural” category, to name a few. Such illustrations help us understand the linkage between cultural landscapes and leisure activities such as camping and glamping. In other

words, the developmental changes and the cultural practices of camping and glamping may have an impact on constructing a landscape for nature, that it is possible to navigate the evolution of the landscape of nature, as well as to examine whether the existing landscape fits the idea of “sustainable landscape”.

Economic activities in the local area may also affect one’s geographical imagination of a place. Camping and glamping are outdoor accommodation options under the demand of a form of travel accommodation. Therefore, the rise of tourism in nature is also important in the construction of a landscape for nature. Research has shown that the total number of protection area visits has been growing in 15 countries in the 2000s (Balmford et.al., 2009), Rising wealth and the emergence of new destinations have also led to the increasing popularity of International tourism, especially in wealthier countries such as the United States and Japan (Balmford et.al., 2009). The rise of tourism can also be observed under the increased complexity of the tourism system. According to Walker (2010), different industries like transportation, attraction, and food services interact with each other to make up the tourism system. For instance, infrastructure like roads and electricity networks are needed to enable easy access to nature. Attractions originated or created in nature can also lead to an increase in incentives for visiting nature. As a result, we cannot ignore them in the construction of a landscape of nature too.

Another component that will affect the construction of a landscape of nature under the rise of tourism is tourism policy and planning. Tourism policy refers to a set of regulations, rules, guidelines, directives, and development or promotion objectives that will directly affect long-term tourism development and daily activities within a destination (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012: 326-327). For instance, the laws of Hong Kong may restrict certain material practices of camping and glamping, which act as a variable in the construction of the natural landscape. Tourism planning on the other hand is the decision-making process under the constraints of tourism policies, and it occurs in many forms, structures, as well as different spatial and temporal scales (Fletcher et.al., 2018). For instance, Hong Kong's tourism planning focuses heavily on market expansion and destination marketing (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2024). This may play a significant part in the construction of the landscape of nature in Hong Kong, as nature may be treated as a destination to attract tourists.

In short, the major concerns of constructing a landscape for nature in this paper include the acknowledgment of the environment itself, including physical landscape resources and the ecosystem services provided in nature; the acknowledgment of the rise of tourism in nature, in the form of the increasing popularity of camping and glamping; tourism system components like service providers and infrastructure, and tourism policy and planning as facilitator or the rise of tourism.

2.3 The Postmaterial Turn and the Rise of Glamping

Another factor that is important in the construction of landscapes is ideology. One major argument of this research paper is that there is a shift in landscapes under the impact of post-materialism. Post-materialism is a term that evolved from materialism, and it has been studied since the 1970s. Fundamentally, due to the welfare and liberal development of the modern state, a stable material and political environment resulted. This provides the foundation for citizens to express and achieve a wide range of values and lifestyles focused on identity and non-economic interests. After the basic needs of humans have been satisfied, environmental concerns may be one of the ‘higher’ values that people may pursue (Schlosberg, 2019).

The most prominent work on postmaterialist values came from Inglehart. He argues that materialists value affluence and security, while postmaterialists value self-actualization and the aesthetic and intellectual aspects of life (Inglehart, 1971, 1977, 1990). Salonen and Åhlberg (2013) reviewed the concept of materialism, linking it with the rise of individualism and consumerism in the Western world. They argue that the modern population has attained possibilities for self-expression and choice far more easily than ever before. Consumerism on the other hand is considered a desirable goal in the modern world as it promotes economic growth. The present economic system is justified by the quantity and quality of choices, which leads to the rise of materialism. However, when the desire to accumulate material to

ensure survival is fulfilled, the importance of material things decreases. A “quality of life” emphasis replaces security values.

Salonen and Åhlberg (2013) studied a group of Finnish university students, identifying some post-materialistic positive attitudes, including the favor of recycling, organic food, renewable energy sources, etc. Marks (1997) studied a group of Australian parents and children and argued that parental socialization, familial and societal formative security, higher education, and contemporary influences may be some of the reasons for the formation of materialist and post-materialistic values. Wang (2016) added depth to the study of post-materialism to include members of the Eastern world. One of the most interesting findings of her research is that objective status has a negative impact on postmaterialism in China. Rather than income, power, and social status, education and lifestyle seemed to be more important for a person to develop post-materialistic values as those in positions of power may not be as educated as one would expect in China. Nevertheless, Wang (2016) did agree that post-materialism largely influenced the consumption values in China, which suggested that Western consumption values like overspending have begun to take hold in China as it moves further into a market-oriented economy. In short, the post-material turn in consumption values is not possible until basic needs are met in societies, which are applicable in Hong Kong.

The rise of glamping in this case may be highly related to the rise of post-materialism. As the

basic needs of people have already been satisfied, people started to think of different ways to enjoy life, enjoy travel. According to Milohnić et al. (2019), the rise of glamping is a response of the market to the increasing demand of wanting to have all the comforts of home while staying outdoors. Camping is now a lifestyle choice instead of the result of personal constraints during traveling. It indicates the conviction and perceived needs of an individual, which provide ground for the commercialization of the camping culture (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). This may be gradually developed through means of marketing, in which glamping has been used as a marketing tool to create and promote tourism destination offers (Bačík et al., 2014). Thus, glamping may just be a marketing strategy used by private campgrounds to emphasize their offerings being more premium than other campgrounds, which can enforce an image of a more premium lifestyle.

In short, the rise of glamping is highly associated with the rise of postmaterialism, studying the rise of glamping can help us conceptualize the influence of postmaterialism, and better understand whether it is an important part of the discourse of a shifting geographical imagination to the sense of nature.

2.4 The comparative framework between camping as a part of natural landscape and glamping as a part of leisure landscape

To understand the influence of camping and glamping on one's geographical imagination of nature, the two outdoor accommodation options will be incorporated into two landscape discourses, namely the natural landscape for camping and the leisure landscape for glamping. In terms of spatial and material practices, one of the main motives of camping is to reconnect with nature (Andrey et al., 2014, p. 2), whereas one of the motives of glamping is to enjoy accommodation in an unusual place, usually of a high standard, sometimes accompanied by high-quality services (Boscoboinik and Bourquard, 2012, p. 158). Camping accommodation solutions are also lower in profile when compared to glamping. According to Andrey *et.al.* (2014), although the range of camping accommodations could be large, it needs to be portable for tourists. This resulted in a highly mobile and flexible nature of camping under the natural landscape.

Whereas for glamping, it is possible to travel outdoors without having to bring any equipment., and there are the luxurious amenities and services typical of a hotel (Dangel et al., 2020). Thus, the amount of resources and human interference with the existing environment is increased as more effort are needed to provide the infrastructure and services of a hotel. The profile of the accommodation structure is also inevitably higher as it needs to suit the expectations of the customers.

In terms of environmental practices, namely the exposure to nature through means like aural,

visual, and smell, the natural landscape promotes direct interaction with nature whereas the leisure landscape promotes indirect interaction with nature. Rantala and Varley (2019) reviewed the mundane, sensory, and emotional enactments of camping, and gave examples to show how wild campers interact ‘with the things’ and the ‘non-human world that surrounds them’ ([Walsh and Tucker, 2009](#), p. 224). For instance, the color and the material of the tent will affect how the campers visually engage with nature during the experience. The lightness of wild camping, which means the material withdrawal when planning a camping trip due to weight and space concerns also enables us to interact with nature directly. Thus, the planning process and the activity itself encourage us to reflect on the take-for-granted material wherewithal of our daily lives, ultimately achieving a clearing and healing state.

Whereas in the case of glamping, visitors are often protected from the elements and can enjoy a lifestyle relatively similar to their daily lives. Under the leisure landscape, visitors need to ‘decode’ the perception of nature through a barrier of existing facilities and activity scenes (Sun & Huang, 2022, p.7). Their interaction with nature is only a continuation of the ‘presentation’ of the concept of the physical environment (Sun & Huang, 2022, p.7). As a result, the leisure landscape promotes an indirect interaction with nature, as visitors’ exposure to nature using aural, visual, and smell is protected and predesigned under the context of glamping.

In terms of cultural practices, camping is inclusive in nature in the sense that camping has a strong emphasis on “freedom” (Andrey et al., 2014, p. 2). Camping grounds are usually freely accessible to all individuals. It also allows a certain degree of creativity. For instance, one may choose how to cook, how to set up their camp, or how to link the accommodating experiences with nature freely. On the other hand, glamping is exclusive in nature in the sense that glamping sites are pre-designed, with existing structures, facilities, and services. One can hardly alter the site according to their desires during their visit. Also, privacy is upheld during the experience (Sommer, 2020, p.10). Glamping sites are only accessible to the people who can pay for the leisure service.

Camping also treasures unexpected “sociability and vacability” (Blichfeldt and Mikkelsen, 2016, p. 123). Camping encourages people to vacant themselves from experience and everyday life contexts so they can be open to socializing (Blichfeldt and Mikkelsen, 2013, p. 21). Glamping on the other hand treasures privacy. Distant from crowds and tourists are often as important as a rural surrounding when it comes to glamping site selection (Sommer, 2020, p.10). There is an expected low interaction with humans when one participates in glamping. This expectation is not limited to human beings but can be applied to wildlife as well.

Moreover, the natural landscape has a strong emphasis on sustainability while the leisure landscape emphasizes customer satisfaction. Camping sites under various configurations,

generally, offer a greater level of flexibility and mobility for accommodation solutions. Thus, camping sites usually provide an open-air-based experience in which real contact with the natural environment can be achieved (Lucivero, 2012, p.2). This enables easier application of sustainable environmental practices. For instance, climatic constraints such as extreme heat in Hong Kong's summer may generate seasonal tourism patterns in camping sites, which promotes the preservation of the environment and scenic value of the area during periods of low-level tourism (Lucivero, 2012, p.2). Without the movable nature of the tent as a housing unit, such practices can be hardly applied.

However, in the glamping context, housing units are often stationed on the site permanently, and multiple facilities such as air-conditioning may enable comfortable access to glamping sites all year round. Thus, having spectacular and luxurious facilities became the basic expectation of customers when they participated in the glamping activity. Consequently, hoping to differentiate themselves from the natural constraints of the camping activities, as well as the existing high-standard facilities of other glamping sites, glamping sites emphasize more in quality customer services and effective management. This resulted in a strong emphasis on customer satisfaction in the leisure landscape (Lu et.al., 2022). Through the above review of the cultural practices of camping and glamping, we can describe that natural landscape treasures the value of aesthetics, in which harmony with nature and other human beings is celebrated. On the other hand, leisure landscape treasures the hedonistic value, as the

sole concern of a successful glamping trip is the satisfaction of the customers themselves.

Table 1 camping v.s. glamping

<i>Natural landscape</i>	<i>leisure landscape</i>
<i>Spatial and Material practices</i>	
Reconnection with nature	High standard and service
Lower human interference	Higher human interference
Low profile	High profile
<i>Environmental practices (aural, visual, smell)</i>	
Direct interaction	Indirect interaction
<i>Cultural practices</i>	
Inclusive	Exclusive
Unexpected socialization	Expected socialization (privacy)
Emphasize sustainability	Emphasize customers satisfaction
Aesthetic value	Hedonistic value

2.5 Significance of this literature review

Through the above literature, we've explored the complex nature behind the construction of landscapes. We had looked deep into camping and glamping as forms of economic activities that are continuously interacting with the environment nearby. On the other hand, literature has shown that the discourse of post-materialism has two sides for us to interpret: an emphasis on environmental concerns as a higher value to pursue and an emphasis on self-expression and self-actualization under an individualist mindset. This possibility of contradiction proved that the discourse of post-materialism alone is not enough for us to justify the shift of landscapes in the outdoor leisure sector. We need more on-site observations to show how practices of camping and glamping are influenced by the discourse of post-materialism. From that, we could justify whether such influence can lead to a shift from the natural landscape to the leisure landscape. Finally, we can justify whether post-materialism is beneficial or not to nature under such a shift. All in all, this literature review provided a great framework for us to understand the influence of post-materialism on the construction of landscape. We can then use the below research methods to testify this contradiction in the discourse of post-materialism.

3. Methodology and results

3.1 Research design

This research mainly combines the method of participant observation with informal interviews. The participant-observer immerses himself in camping and glamping experiences with a group of participants. A two-day camping or glamping trip, including its planning process and gear preparation, will be organized in each observation. The participant observer will carry out different outdoor activities, including setting up the tent, cooking outdoors, as well as enjoying different services provided by the sites. The participant-observer will observe the behavior of campers and glampers, as well as the spatial, material, environmental, and cultural practices of camping and glamping sites. If staff are available in either camping or glamping sites, their services and practices will also be observed during the participant observation process. Tools used during the participant observation trips include photographs, field sketches, field notes, audio recordings, etc.

Informal and unstructured interviews will also be conducted with campers and glampers during camping and glamping trips to understand their behavior, thoughts, feelings, lived experiences, and values. These interviews are conducted to understand their sense of place towards nature. The participant observer will also raise questions and conduct dynamic

discussions with participants to understand their motives and feelings behind certain practices.

All interviews are conducted using the mother tongue of the participants. Examples of the questions used during the interviews are shown as follows:

Table 2 Examples of the questions used during the informal interviews

1. Up until now, could you describe your camping/glamping trip? Did you enjoy it?
 2. How did you learn about this camping glamping site? Where did you get relevant information?
 3. What is your favorite part about this particular camping/glamping trip? Why?
 4. What is your favorite part of this particular camping/glamping site? Why?
 5. What is your most disliked part about this particular camping/glamping trip? Why?
 6. What is your most disliked part about this particular camping/glamping site? Why?
 7. Would you like to have another camping/glamping trip in the future? Why?
 8. What will you consider when you plan your next camping/glamping trip? Why?
 9. What does camping/glamping mean to you? What can camping/glamping bring you? Could you use some adjectives to describe them?
 10. What does the nature mean to you? How do you feel about your relationship with nature? Could you use some adjectives to describe your relationship with nature?
 11. Did you think this particular camping/glamping trip made you think about nature differently?
How?
-

3.2 Data collection

2 local camping sites and 2 local glamping sites will be chosen as the sites for participant observation. The participant of the observation trips, whose only requirements are aged between 18 – 65 and currently living in Hong Kong would be targeted and invited by the participant observer to participate in the trip. They will plan and organize the trip together with the participant observer not necessarily being the leader. For the informal interviews, participants of the observation trips will be invited to interview during the trips. Random campers or glampers will also be invited to conduct the interviews as long as they fit the above-mentioned criteria during the camping or glamping trip. The interview takes around 20 to 45 minutes depending on the interview group size. All costs of the observation trips are equally divided between the participant observer and participants. No potential benefits are provided for participating in the observation trips or finishing the interview.

3.3 Results

A total of 4 observation trips were organized (Fig.1-4), including 2 camping trips and 2 glamping trips. 6 participants, including 5 males and 1 female, aged 22-62, were invited to participate in the observation trips and interviews. 2 additional females in their 20s were

invited during the observation trips to do the interview. 5 participants were interviewed during camping trips and 3 were interviewed during glamping trips.



Figure 1-4 *The environmental setting of the four observation trips*

4. **Findings**

4.1 Findings 1: nature is already highly integrated with leisure

A majority of interviewees (6 out of 8) associate nature with adjectives like “relaxing” and “a place to relax”, regardless of natural or leisure landscape. Two interviewees emphasized nature is different from their usual living environment, which they found to be an important part of their interaction with nature. For instance, interviewee C said “Nature is a place that is different from my usual urban living area, it represents a different lifestyle, another form of living. Interviewee H also said, “Nature always provides me with new experiences, it enables me to step out of my comfort zone and broaden my horizons.” From the interviewees' responses, interactions with nature were often viewed as an adventure or a form of stepping away from a known lifestyle.

One interviewee associate nature with travel-like experience and cleanliness. Interviewee F, when asked what glamping meant to her, answered “When I visit this glamping site, it seems that I leave the hustle and bustle in Hong Kong and go to travel in a foreign country, like visiting a European town’. She also emphasized that “glamping should be encouraged as it provides a clean place for us to intergrade with nature”. Here we could see that no matter in natural or leisure landscape, interviewees associate nature with positive experiences. This is

perhaps due to the services provided by glamping under the leisure landscape as it provided a safe and enjoyable way for people to experience nature as an unknown form of living.

Although unknown risks and challenges may occur under the natural landscape, people cannot experience these challenges under the leisure landscape. They may mistake it as the whole and true form of nature. In other words, instead of experiencing nature in its true form, nature has already entangled with hedonistic concepts like lifestyle, having fun, having an adventure, and a place to achieve self-actualization, to the point that there is little concern about what nature should “truly” look like. Nature now mainly serves the purpose of allowing the hectic Hong Kong citizens to retreat from their pressurized daily lives. As a result, it should be “relaxing”, and it is preferable if nature is like a “European town”.

4.2 Findings 2: material practices of glamping reinforced the sense of leisure in nature

According to field observations, there are a lot of man-made materials and gadgets used in the two glamping sites that can create a “false” sense of nature for the interviewees. Plumwood (2006) refers to it as “deceptive naturalness”, in which something has been counted as 'nature' in the sense of 'pure nature' when it, in fact, is a part of human influence in nature. For instance, grass-like synthetic carpets (Fig. 5) are used all around the glamping site to ensure that the color of the pavement is pleasant to the eye and comfy to step on, whereas the natural earth should be a bit brown due to humus and decaying leaves. It is also rougher in texture as

it is mixed with tree branches, pebbles, and dry leaves. Also, an artificial fountain (Fig.6) was built on the site to create an artificial pond for people to take pictures. It can also provide the sound of a running river, which others may perceive as a feature that should be presented in nature. Air-conditioning (Fig.7) is also available in the glamping tents, enabling guests to escape from the heat during summer. Rather than recreating nature in its true form and hoping customers to reconnect with nature, which is emphasized in the natural landscape, these material practices are employed to fit one's lifestyle in urban areas and the "expectation" of nature.



Figure 5 *Grass-like synthetic carpet used in glamping sites*



Figure 6 *Artificial fountain built in glamping sites*



Figure 7 *Air conditioning in glamping tents*

Although each material practice may be insignificant, it may alter one's sense of nature when combined and commercialized. Interviewee G, a man in his 60s, praised the feature of the 16-inch-thick bedding (Fig.8) provided in the glamping tent, claiming that "Due to my age, I need thick bedding to ensure a good night's sleep." Interviewee F, a lady in her 20s, after discovering the light bulbs all around the glamping site, claimed "I look forward to the romantic vibe after the lights have been turn on at night." Thick bedding, adequate lighting, or even atmospheric lighting (Fig. 9) are luxuries of our industrialized and commercialized society, which are not norms of nature. Instead, it is normal for nature to be pitch black at night and horrible to sleep on.



Figure 8 *16-inch-thick bedding in glamping tents*



Figure 9 *Atmosphere lighting in glamping sites*

Nevertheless, these goods have been so common in modern society to the point that they have been treated as necessities for a lot of people. When these goods are provided to individuals even in nature, they may be happy as they can enjoy the same level of comfort at home. They may even think that nature is just as good as their homes, which is not necessarily bad. What's bad is that they started to expect such comfort in nature and thought that nature was a place to satisfy their desires. Such mindsets may develop into a discourse of acceptance to alter nature to satisfy one's desire, which does not align with the "low human interference" principle of the natural landscape and is shifting towards the principle of "prioritizing satisfaction" under the leisure landscape. Therefore, the material practices of glamping would reinforce the sense of leisure in nature, and facilitate the shift of the natural landscape to the leisure landscape.

4.3 Findings 3: A blurring boundary between natural landscape and leisure landscape

Echoing with finding 1, the observation trips, namely the camping trips organized under the natural landscape, revealed that there's a blurring boundary between natural landscape and leisure landscape. The discourse of the natural landscape shifting towards the leisure landscape is based on the rise of glamping due to the desire to "have the best of two worlds", which is the need to reconnection with nature while having all the luxury in an urban area. Yet it does not mean the traditional camper would insist on their low-profile behavior in an attempt to preserve the natural landscape. Campers would also learn the material practices of glampers and pick the ones that they think would benefit them during their camping trips.

In fact, according to field observation, more and more campers started to choose their tents based on style. These tents may have roomy space for dining and poles often over two meters for unrestricted movement in the tent. Campers also started aligning their gear with a specific color scheme, for instance, black, to create a trendy look. Moreover, lights and portable speakers are often purchased and used during camping trips to increase the vibe at night.

Another interesting example is that during one of my observation trips, interviewee C brought take-away meals to the campsite as his lunch (Fig.10). When I asked about the reasons behind such practice, he simply replied, "Cooking meals in the campsite is just too troublesome. I think it is completely normal to brought take-away meals to the campsite." In traditional

camping, gear selection focuses mainly on functionality. Camping practices also prioritize sustainable practices, such as the awareness of light and noise pollution and the limitation of solid waste. However, due to the prevalence of a leisure-driven discourse, campers may start to treat camping as a form of lifestyle and an opportunity to express their taste, which is a part of the leisure landscape.



Figure 10 *Take-away meals brought by interviewee C during a camping trip*

Therefore, the integration of leisure in nature does not necessarily symbolize a one-way shift of the natural landscape to the leisure landscape, it also affects the fundamental sense of nature under the natural landscape, to the point that it is also slowly transforming the natural landscape. In other words, it would be harder and harder to differentiate the two landscapes simply using camping and glamping.

5. Discussion

5.1 *A sense of the protected nature*

In finding 2, we have found out that the material practices of glamping would reinforce the sense of leisure in nature as it created a false sense of nature. Yet the environmental practices of glamping played an even more important role in transforming the natural landscape into a leisure landscape, as it created a sense of “the protected nature”. This concept can be investigated by studying the sensory exposure of nature under the two landscapes.

In leisure landscape, which is the case of glamping, visual, aural, and smell exposure to nature is often indirect. For instance, during field observations, I discovered that two layers of tarps are used in the glamping tent to ensure that wind would not easily get in the tent, move its structure, or cause any unwanted sound. The tarp and tent structure was also attached to a frame made of steel poles to increase its rigidity (Fig.11). The two tarps can also prevent heating of the tent due to direct exposure to sunlight. Here we can see that environmental practices of glamping sites emphasize the separation of the elements to human beings, at least when they are in the glamping tent. When you interact with nature, you are protected in the sense that you can retreat from the exposure of nature when it does not suit your needs and desires. On the other hand, camping emphasizes direct exposure to nature, you must adapt to

the heating of the tent during hot days or try to accept that wind may move your tent at night, causing sounds that can disturb your sleep. During heavy rainstorms, strong winds and water may even compromise the structure of the tent. Such direct exposure to the elements may not be enjoyable for every individual, yet it is an irreplaceable part of outdoor leisure under the natural landscape. Without it, experience with nature will be less comprehensive, and an opportunity to gain insights towards nature may be lost.



Figure 11 *Structural features of a typical glamping tent*

The exposure to nature under leisure landscape is also expected and intended. According to field observation, adequate atmospheric lighting around photo spots and the glamping site itself is a distinctive feature in that glamping trip regardless of the weather and the fee paid by the customers. Similarly, the artificial fountain that creates water movement and sounds of a running river is always on until 11 pm, regardless of the preference of the customers. This environmental practice of glamping sites is to ensure that once customers pay for the glamping trip, they can at least enjoy the service of well-decorated photo spots at night, as

well as hear the sounds of running rivers in the glamping sites. Visitors expect these kinds of exposure to nature and they are well aware that they are protected when they interact with nature. For example, they will know that they are safe when exploring nature at night due to the adequate lighting. After gathering enough information about the site, they would then decide whether they would pay for the trips. During the visit, the setting of the exposure to nature would not change, even if they found it irritating. Such kind of indirect and expected sensory overload must have a purpose, and I believe it has to do with the commodification of nature under the leisure landscape.

When I further discussed the topic of sensory exposure with interviewee G during the interview, he gave his opinion on the motives behind such phenomenon, and suggested that “Glamping sites are purposefully designed, hoping customers to pay for their services and experiences”. I found this answer fascinating because it explained the practical concerns of the glamping site owners when they tried to commodify nature and sell it to customers as a part of outdoor accommodation. If they would like to charge people money for an experience in nature, it is best to set some criteria for customers to look forward to and testify. Just like when buying a pack of cookies, you would try to look for its ingredients and research for its feedbacks. You may even compare it with other brands, hoping to make a wise decision. Nonetheless, when we put this kind of commodified and economic mindset in nature, will it truly reveal what is nature?

On another observation trip to a camping site, I and a group of interviewees had an unexpected encounter with a boar during midnight. Although we did not see the boar in real person, we experienced its damage after we woke up the next morning. Our gear loss included a few tear-up plastic bags (Fig.12) and tissue packages (Fig.13), and a punctured liquefied petroleum gas canister (Fig.14). Below are some quotes from my interviewees when I reflect upon the incident with them during the interview,

Interviewee A: “I heard and smelled the boar last night. I was afraid that it would tear up our fragile tent. It seems that the boar was just inches away from our tent.”

Interviewee D: “I never thought boars would be so bold to raid the campsite. I thought they would be shy and avoid human beings.” ... “It seems that they have already adapted to the existence of humans in the campsite. I learned a lot.”



Figure 12 Tear-up plastic bag

Figure 13 Tear-up tissue package



Figure 14 *Punctured liquefied petroleum gas canister*

Here we could see that in the case of wildlife encounters, the sensory exposure to nature under the natural landscape is often unexpected and direct. Such exposure can affect an individual more personally due to surprise and proximity. They can reflect on the experience and learn how to co-exist and achieve harmony with nature. Ultimately, it is more likely to induce change in people’s sense of place towards nature, which would be more difficult for the “protected nature” approach of the leisure landscape.

5.2 Cultural practices of camping pave importance in the preservation of natural landscape

Discussing the transformation of the natural landscape into a leisure landscape under the discourse of a “protected nature” provides us with great knowledge of the core beliefs of the two landscapes. This also gave us a glimpse of the importance of the preservation of natural landscape under this shift, as it is unique and beneficial to a diversified sense of place towards nature. There are mainly two cultural practices of camping that pave importance in the

preservation of natural landscapes, including the emphasis on freedom and autonomy and the emphasis on collective experience and socialization.

In the natural landscape, freedom and autonomy are emphasized in the sense that there are limitless ways to interact with nature. You could design your trip, including the destination, methods of travel, gear selection, activities, budget, etc. The agency of power lies within the participants. Thus, participants can engage with nature more directly and gain insights from it.

When I asked interviewee G what is his favorite part of camping, he replied “I enjoy the process of where and how to set up our tent. Sometimes it would be quite tricky at first, but once we figured out how to adapt to the nearby terrain, we can set up beautiful and natural tents.” Here we could see that the freedom and autonomy provided by camping enabled more opportunities for people to interact with nature, and have a greater sense of success.

For the glamping sites under leisure landscape, you need to sacrifice some form of freedom and autonomy in exchange for the comforts that are unique to the leisure landscape. The agency of power lies within the site owners. For instance, you don’t get to decide the fee of the glamping tents, the activities available at the time of visit, staff numbers, or the setting of the glamping sites. In exchange you get the comfort of not needing to prepare and carry your gear, setting up your glamping tent. You may also enjoy a higher level of comfort living in the wilderness as you can pay to live in bigger treehouses, supported by air-conditioning. Yet

sometimes the loss of freedom and autonomy to design every detail during the trip may cause frustration among individuals. Interviewee G claimed “I won’t choose to rent the cook set provided by the glamping site. They set all the charges, I can’t have any say.” As a result, the emphasis on freedom and autonomy under the natural landscape did have its uniqueness that is worth preserving.

The emphasis on collective experience and socialization is also another unique feature of the natural landscape that is worth preserving. In camping activities and culture, there’s a strong emphasis on the harmony between nature and people. Campers are often encouraged to interact with each other, sometimes even help each other, which is also a part of the fun of camping. Camping is also a great opportunity for you to know more about your friends since you need to face different challenges with your friends starting from the planning process. Besides, camping sites usually don’t have quotas and designated spaces for each tent. Thus, you may meet other groups of campers due to the proximity of tents during the peak seasons. This will also create more opportunities for you to socialize and connect with people, which is often one of the greatest ups of camping and is celebrated among generations of campers. Ultimately, natural landscape is inclusive in nature, campers look forward to socializing. Below are some quotes from my interviewees when being asked what their favorite part about camping was,

Interviewee E: “I enjoyed the process of planning the trip together with you guys”.

Interviewee C: “I enjoyed the unexpected encounter with the girls next to our camp, we exchanged food and had a little chat, it made our trip less lonely”.

For the glamping sites under the leisure landscape, although you may also socialize with your friends and families, comfort and having an enjoyable experience is often more important than socializing with new friends. Emphasis of privacy in glamping is a great concern for glamping sites. According to field observation, glamping sites are often isolated from the general public, people are only allowed to enter the site if they have already booked for the service. Thus, it is expected that the site would have only limited visitors no greater than its carrying capacity. Each glamping area also has a fence made of wood to ensure privacy. It is a less ideal setting for strangers to socialize as going through fences may symbolize an invasion of social boundaries. Therefore, people would prefer to interact with the people they already know rather than socialize with strangers. In other words, leisure landscape is exclusive in nature and glampers seek limited socialization.

By comparing the two landscapes in terms of socialization, we can see that natural landscape encourage people to sacrifice privacy and physical comfort in exchange for human interaction. This helps combat the discourse of post-materialism. Instead of focusing on self-

actualization through the exploration of living styles, people are encouraged to pay attention to the feelings and needs of the people around them. Instead of focusing on the endless search for the best “quality of life”, people could be reminded to treasure the things that they already have and treasure more in the relationship between human beings.

By promoting the preservation of natural landscape, it is hoped that the reflection of outdoor accommodation values would also project to the reflection of the relationship between humans and nature. If the humanistic care of the natural landscape can be preserved, it would help combat the discourse of the commodification of nature to fit human interests. If people could treasure mutual respect between men and nature in the discussion of the sense of place towards nature, it would be beneficial in creating a more diversified geographical imagination of Hong Kong’s nature.

6. Conclusion and suggestions of future research

All in all, this study aimed to study the influence of the discourse of post-materialism on the outdoor leisure sector. After reviewing relevant literature and gathering on-site data from camping and glamping sites, we could see that post-materialism did influence the landscape of nature in the following ways:

Firstly, through the eyes of our participants, glamping seems to be a practice that is post-materialistic at first glance. It is considered a great opportunity for us to look beyond our materialistic lives in urban areas and reconnect with nature in a protected environment.

However, the perspective towards the purpose of nature has already slowly shifted. Under the natural landscape, camping is merely a practice for the appreciation of the beauty of the environment. Yet under the influence of post-materialism, in the case of glamping, the environment is merely used as an arena, a place, and a space for exploration of lifestyles and self-actualization. This aligns with existing literature like Plumond's (2006) and Sun and Huang's (2022), in which they both pointed out that the interaction of men with nature is altered due to barriers created by men. This resulted in a "deceptive" sense of place towards nature, and one must "decode" it to appreciate nature in its true form.

Secondly, this also raises reflection on the reasons for the emergence of glamping. People have been traveling around the world in search of materialistic and non-materialistic gains, like physical comfort, a switch of lifestyles, and one's purpose in life. Yet, why choose nature as an arena to do so? Why choose glamping instead of camping to achieve these purposes? If we look deep into this issue with post-materialistic values, we can see that interacting with nature in the form of glamping can help make the experience more individualistic. Through the consumption of services and facilities, one may feel a sense of power over the challenges provided in the environment. Just like mentioned by my interviewees, in urban areas, they can hardly alter or change their hectic lifestyle. Nonetheless, in glamping they can use nature as a medium to explore other forms of living, to search for beauty, comfort, and peace without being criticized by the nearby environment. In other words, they've mixed up the joy of reconnecting with nature with the joy of consuming hedonistic practices. They are self-actualizing in the sense that they choose what lifestyles they want to live in and achieve a higher quality of living.

This discourse may bring negative outcomes as it alienates individuals from the environment.

Sometimes it is natural for the environment to look the way as it is and it doesn't do any good

to the environment if someone always wants to alter it to suit his/her desires out of a self-centered mindset. Instead, we should learn how to co-exist and achieve harmony with it, just like how it is celebrated in the traditional practices of camping under the natural landscape. Consequently, it also exposed that, although the discourse of post-materialism has a side that emphasizes environmental concerns, it contradicts itself as its core is about self-actualization and individual gains. It is suggested that the concept should be thoroughly reviewed and refined to make it more useful in the discussion of landscapes.

This study also contributed to constructing a landscape for modern Hong Kong nature. In short, the landscape of modern Hong Kong nature is still a mix of the natural landscape and leisure landscape, with the boundary being harder and harder to navigate, as suggested in the findings of this research paper. However, the phenomenon of the natural landscape shifting to a leisure landscape under the discourse of post-materialism indeed exists. It is suggested that glamping will be more popular in the future and practices of glamping will become more common in camping trips. The evolution of landscapes will continue, yet it is unlikely that the leisure landscape will completely replace the natural landscape.

For suggestions of future research, it is suggested that the seasonality of camping and glamping could be addressed in further research as all the observation trips conducted under the name of this research paper were done during the spring of 2024. By studying camping and glamping in summer, the limitations of enjoying the outdoors under the natural landscape may be more easily felt by individuals, whereas the benefits of glamping under the leisure landscape may be more inviting for a lot more people. It is also suggested that institutions and regulations, such as government tourism policy and laws may be a great topic to study besides ideology to add depth to this topic as it can address the nature of camping and glamping as tourism behavior and economic activity.

Ultimately, as intangible and complicated as it may seem, the study of landscape and sense of place is intriguing. It helps us explain our geographic imagination of different dimensions of our world in an organized manner, and I think it is worth further studying in geography academia.

(without abstract: 9092 with abstract: 9223)

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