

LANDSCAPE JOURNAL

Design, Planning, and Management of the Land

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Design, Planning, and Management of the Land

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Front Cover: Fields of St. Croix Conservation Subdivision, Lake Elmo, MN. Photograph by Laura Musacchio (used with permission). Figure 1 in "Metropolitan Landscape Ecology," by Laura Musacchio.

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Editor's Introduction

Late last summer, during the annual meeting of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture hosted by Penn State (see conference review by Le Bleu, this issue), Frederick Steiner asked a startling question: “How green is *Landscape Journal*?” After all, the subtitle of *Landscape Journal*—“Design, Planning and Management of the Land”—suggests that topics such as sustainability ought to receive more than passing editorial attention. A backwards glance at the content of the *Journal* suggests that our portfolio of history and cultural landscape studies is overweight in comparison to landscape analysis or applied research on environmental processes. Have we strayed? Or is this content an accurate profile of what our authors—most of them members of CELA—most care about?

Taking the longer view, of course various issues in landscape architecture will wax and wane and eclipse each other, as in every field. The currency, relevance, and range of disciplinary discourses are first identified by our authors and reflected in the work they submit. Peer reviewers confirm or challenge their relevance. Only then are the very best of these articles selected for publication. This is as it should be; an academic journal should reflect the intellectual life of the academy. It worries us only when academics seem oblivious to problems and questions of enormous import for landscape architecture.

This definitely does *not* mean we are suddenly uninterested in work on the cultural landscape subject matter that *Landscape Journal* has traditionally published. Far from it! But the recent ASLA conference was a good reminder of the broader range of problems that *Landscape Journal* might address more directly (see conference review by Deming, this issue). Going forward, we encourage greater scholarly emphasis on topical issues facing landscape architecture as a field of practice: for instance, sustainability, environmental justice, protecting the public realm, managing urban growth in shrinking cities, and/or landscape urbanism, among other things.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

To that end we are very pleased to introduce this special issue surveying the practical and theoretical challenges of metropolitan ecology, guest-edited by Laura Musacchio (University of Minnesota). “Green” or not, contributors offer a range of useful frameworks and case studies, operating at a variety of scales, that describe active interdisciplinary exchanges between environmental professionals, urban designers, and landscape architects. This special issue places much-needed attention on the way nature and culture interrelate, and sometimes collide, in the metropolitan landscape.

Most of the papers included in this issue were initially assembled for an interdisciplinary symposium, *Myths and Realities of Ecology, Design, and Ecosystem Health in the Metropolitan Landscape*, held at the University of Minnesota’s College of Design (April 2006), and organized by Laura Musacchio. The ostensible purpose of the gathering was a reality check on the difficulties of understanding metropolitan ecology well enough to confidently intervene in its processes. The symposium generated a strong group of draft manuscripts. During the subsequent processes of peer review and editing, however, challenges emerged. A score of peer reviewers were dissatisfied with the scope of some of these presentations—either they were too narrow, too uncritical or non-spatial, or else too general, too vague, and seemingly impossible to operationalize. The guest editor was forced to consider how topics in landscape ecology may be evaluated competently when certain concepts and operations need to be “translated” between disciplines.

To bring a new approach to bear on an old problem, therefore, Musacchio introduces the concept of *translational research*. How shall planners, conservation biologists, and designers speak to one another about shared observations and complex problems of metropolitan regions when their own disciplinary delimitations and scales of observation need first to be recognized and

then mediated? In some ways this issue is a reprise of work edited by Joan Nassauer, *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology* (1997), a decade or so earlier. If that work was diagnostic and advocated for new interdisciplinary understanding, this issue of *Landscape Journal* is slightly more hard-headed, analyzing stubborn problems and shedding light on persistent misunderstandings.

Independent Articles

As in past theme issues, the editors have supplemented the original theme group with additional articles submitted independently. These articles support the general goals of the issue and illustrate certain difficulties inherent in practicing landscape design and management in metropolitan regions. Since Musacchio describes the theme articles generated from her symposium in her following comments, it is our privilege to introduce these two supplementary articles here.

Both articles demonstrate practical concepts and limitations of planting design and management in metropolitan regions, particularly in arid regions or

in drought conditions in moderate zones. The first article, by Virginia Hooper et al. (Utah State University), surveys attitudes and understanding about the use of native plants in the intermountain west region of the United States. Respondents were all members of the local chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). The results, though commendable in many respects, demonstrate why so much of what is already understood about the art and science of plant ecology may not actually be put into practice.

The second article, by Robert Brzuszek and Jason Walker (Mississippi State University), examines the difficulties of reconciling fire hazards with popular desires for ornamental planting and sheltering vegetation close to structures. Given the recent disastrous wildfires in San Diego and Malibu, California, this article could not be more timely. Both articles are examples of a type of critical practical research we would like to see more of in the pages of *Landscape Journal*.

MED

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Errata

The most recent issue of *Landscape Journal* (Fall 2007) stimulated an interesting and erudite exchange between two scholars of European modernism. Dr. Malene Hauxner (Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark) wishes to correct and illuminate two points made by Dorothée Imbert (Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University), author of “The AIAJM: A Manifesto for Landscape Modernity” (*LJ* 26:2, 219–235).

Hauxner informs us that although the eminent Jens Jensen (Danish émigré to the United States) was scheduled to speak at the 1938 International Congress of Garden Architects, he did not actually attend and his paper was read *in absentia*. For those interested in the content, Hauxner provides citations for Jensen’s paper in both German (Hein-

rich Wiepking-Jürgensmann, *12. Internationaler Gartenbaukongress Band 2 Berlin 1938*) and Danish sources (Mogens Stahlschmidt Nielsen, *XII Internationale Havebrugskongres Havekunst 1938*, 115–119).

Second, Imbert bases her assumption that C. Th. Sørensen attended the 1938 conference on Milena Matteini’s work *Pietro Porcinai: Architetto del giardino e del paesaggio* (Electa 1991), which suggests that C. Th. Sørensen headed the Danish delegation. However, Hauxner asserts that “Denmark was not represented at the 12th International Horticultural Congress in Berlin in 1938 and certainly not by C. Th. Sørensen, who was very anti-Nazi” (via email December 5, 2007).

Author and editor alike thank Dr. Hauxner for bringing both issues to our attention. As the international narratives of the history of our discipline continue to emerge, we are gratified by this evidence of close reading and constructive criticism.