

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