

# Editors' Introduction

## CHANGES IN LANDSCAPE JOURNAL STAFF AND EDITORIAL PROCESSES

In the fall 2013 issue, we announced major changes afoot at *Landscape Journal*. Coeditor Lance Neckar left the University of Minnesota to accept a position as Professor of Environmental Analysis at Pitzer College, Claremont, California and Director of the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability, and he resigned as coeditor of *LJ* effective December 31, 2013. Managing editor, Vincent deBritto has also stepped aside from *LJ* in order to pursue other professional opportunities. In response to these changes, the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) Board of Directors appointed Daniel Nadenicek, Dean of the University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design (CED), to join David Pitt as coeditor. Likewise, CED Associate Professor Ashley Steffens is the new managing editor. In light of these appointments and UGA's capacity to fulfill *LJ*'s copyediting needs, the CELA Board also approved a relocation of the *Landscape Journal* editorial office to the University of Georgia until the current contract runs out in 2016, at which time CELA will seek proposals for new editors. The new address for the *LJ* Editorial Office is:

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We have also updated the manuscript submission process and guidelines to an online submission procedure through E-Journal Press. For more information, see the Manuscript Guidelines in the back of this issue or visit our new site at [lj.msubmit.net](http://lj.msubmit.net).

## SCHOLARSHIP FOR A CHANGING WORLD

These internal changes have inspired us to wonder about how more profound and comprehensive changes taking place in the world will impact *LJ* as well as our academic and professional practitioner readers. With the many unprecedented social, economic, political, and environmental disruptions the nation and world have endured over the last several years, it is important to ask—where do we go from here? The future, it seems, promises only more uncertainty as leaders at all levels seek to regain stability and attempt to define the “new normal.”

In recent decades, the quest to locate the appropriate path forward has engendered speculation by pundits, futurists, and writers. In hypothesizing about distinct cycles within the larger pattern of history, William Straus and Neil Howe (1997) suggest that the nation was unraveling in the 1990s and that there would be a period of crisis about a decade later. That prophecy certainly proved accurate. Writing in a similar vein, post-crash authors such as Richard Florida, (2010) and Paul Gilding (2011), suggest that new ways of thinking, working, designing, and building inevitably emerge after periods of crisis and collapse. More recently, Rebecca Ryan (2013) interprets the seasonality of economics and suggests that a new future always emerges during the “dark days of the winter season.” While scholars may challenge a very structured interpretation of cyclical history, few will argue with these writers' vantage and prescience on the inevitability of massive social and environmental changes occurring in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Many of these changes will directly affect those who design, plan, or manage the landscape and those who study landscape intervention through various disciplinary lenses. While we intend to discuss more of these changes in future *Landscape Journal* issues, this introduction focuses on the unrelenting transformation

of technology, environmental challenges, and demographic changes and shifting populations.

### Transformation of Technology

Information technology is a subject of significant debate among landscape architects. The dichotomous points of view found within the profession, discipline, and allied disciplines are similar to and influenced by perspectives found in recently published books and articles. Technology is sometimes seen as the enemy (or at least one of the enemies). For example, Richard Louv (2005) suggests that the allure of technology contributes to “nature deficit disorder” among our children and Maggie Jackson (2008) warns that technology and the overconsumption of information is causing a significant drop in the ability of our youth and many adults to focus attention.

While many landscape designers and planners agree with these points of view and offer immediate experience with the “real landscape” as part of the cure, others are much more positive and reassured about the present and future benefits of information technology. For example, Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown (2011) provide evidence that technology has the capacity to enhance creative thought and facilitate necessary collaborations. Even Richard Louv (2011) sees the benefits of hybrid thinking to counter the false dichotomy of nature and technology. Malcolm McCullough (2013) steps back from arguments about the good and bad of technology by focusing on the very nature of “attention” in order to develop a useful philosophy of information systems. In part through a reconnection with physical form, McCullough argues, we can become stewards of information rather than hapless victims allowing us to replace overload or distraction with embodiment and concentration.

Research on technology in the design disciplines, therefore, must move beyond arguments about hand or computer graphics to some of these richer and more complex questions. We believe *Landscape Journal* can help facilitate a meaningful dialog on the topic, and we invite manuscript submissions relative to this subject.

### Environmental Challenges

Landscape architecture and related fields also need to carefully consider their place in the essential debates about the environment. Over time, writing about the environment has evolved from a cry for protecting

“nature as other” to a balanced view, which integrates human and natural values. The vocabulary emanating from this writing has also evolved from discussions of preserving wild nature, to sustainability, to resilience.

In writing about both natural and human systems, Andrew Zolli and Ann Marie Healy (2012) discuss concepts of agility, adaptation, and transformation and are critical of sustainability, which they argue is more about equilibrium than adaptive change. Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2012) adds the concept of *antifragile* to the dialog. While Taleb uses the concept in reference to business and economics, he illustrates how ill-advised attempts to control and plan everything in the world may contribute to immense disasters.

Heeding Taleb’s admonition to avoid the temptation to define a singular environmental trajectory for every design project, perhaps we need an adaptive design approach that uses various geodesign and other technologies to model ecosystem performance among alternative design scenarios. Ecosystem performance modeling allows landscape designers and planners as well as stakeholders to “try on” alternative scenarios (Jordan et al. 2011) moving interactively between the “proposing” and “disposing” of alternative scenarios (Lyle 1985) based on reliable and accurate estimates of landscape performance that is integrated across desired levels of ecosystem services (Nassauer and Opdam 2008). We welcome manuscripts exploring these topics including those that challenge the “master plan” as the central *modus operandi*.

Rather than holding to the myth that landscape architects are among the original protectors of nature, the profession might better acknowledge its role in designing coupled human and natural systems that link the provision of ecosystem services with economic and capitalistic ventures. Taking advantage of one of the profession’s greatest strengths—the ability to facilitate discussions about complex subjects across disciplines—we might examine recent publications (for example Tercek and Adams 2013) to understand how the profession may better succeed by applying techniques that help us communicate the benefits of sound environmental decisions to those in power in business and government.

Recognizing that science rarely achieves broad societal changes without implementing sophisticated communication strategies reliant on the social sciences, the National Science Foundation (NSF) recently funded the Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center

(SESYNC) at the University of Maryland to bring the best of natural and social science together with an eye toward environmental improvement and environmental education. SESYNC's focus on actionable science might also provide opportunities for landscape architecture and planning because practitioners in both fields are trained to act.

All of these developments provide another rich field of possibilities for scholarship. How might landscape design and planning help better communicate the relationship of humans to the environment, and how might sophisticated public engagement strategies assist landscape architects in their quest to preserve and protect resources, while contributing to the health of the economy? Once again, we believe that *Landscape Journal* articles could contribute to the dialog about the role of social, cultural, and political processes in assessing and assigning environmental and economic value to the provision of ecosystem services and the role of design and planning in attempting to strike an "appropriate" balance among these value systems in project development and management.

### Demographic Changes and Shifting Populations

The United States population will grow older and more diverse in the coming decades and its geographic distribution will change. For example, William H. Frey (2014) identifies changing migration and immigration patterns, lays out a new racial map for the United States, discusses an African American migration back to the south, and elaborates on the broader fan of Hispanic migration across large portions of the nation. Eric J. Bailey (2013) discusses the implications of a significant growth in multiracial and multiethnic populations through the United States, and Ted C. Fishman (2010) relates the larger implications of an aging white population including a high unemployment rate among teenagers and young adults.

Several authors have discussed the consequences of reverse migration patterns on America's Rustbelt cities. Detroit has especially received great attention with treatments ranging from Charlie LeDuff's (2013) post-apocalyptic assessment of the city to John Gallagher's (2010) more optimistic view of the city's potential to make use of empty space and retrofit infrastructure. We welcome more manuscripts that bring a circumspect analysis of what design and planning can do in situations in which demographic shifts, economic

decline, and social changes are altering the nation. We also ask what can the practice of our profession and writing by scholars reasonably contribute as the nation attempts to solve these significant place-based problems?

It is no longer possible to concentrate just on North America. Only a few years ago, we became an urban world for the first time. Cities having populations of four, five, and six million people now contain more than 15 million. In many parts of the world, growth is uncontrolled and living conditions are deplorable (Davis 2006, Neuwirth 2005, and Kramer 2006). Thomas Freedman (2008) moves beyond issues of poverty to the distribution of prosperity through increased consumerism and access to technology on a global scale, while Richard Florida (2008) discusses the unequal distribution of opportunity in various parts of the world because of the concentration of economic activity, population, innovation and creativity, and research and development.

In our attempt to expand coverage of this topic in *Landscape Journal*, we are particularly interested in manuscripts that provide a better understanding of other cultures and places. We also need to accurately and fairly present what the practice of our professions and the scholarship of academics can reasonably contribute to the current debates about social change and the relationship to place and space in complex international networks.

### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The four articles presented in this issue reflect the range of value systems and topical foci that are addressed in our earlier discussion. Two articles examine international landscapes (McMorran and Sinha) and two investigate North American landscapes (Sleipness and Desimini). Three explore landscape imagery and meaning (McMorran, Sinha, and Sleipness) and one espouses a unique role for landscape architects in the emerging issue of landscape planning and design in shrinking cities (Desimini). We bookend the two investigations of North American landscapes with those examining international landscapes.

In his article, "A Landscape of 'Undesigned Design' in Rural Japan," Senior Lecturer Chris McMorran, an American cultural geographer in the Department of Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore employs a mixed methods

approach involving interviews and participant observation to examine Kurokawa, a major hot springs tourism resort in the mountains of central Kyūshū in Japan. He examines Kurokawa's "undesigned" tourist landscape and the decades of fūkeizukuri involving the role of local actors in creating a nostalgic rural theme that exemplifies the idealized aesthetics and social relations of the past as well as an adaptation to the present.

Many cities in the American Midwest have witnessed a loss of overall population, tax revenues, political representation, and federal dollars. Some of these "shrinking cities" have lost as much as 60% of their mid-20th century peak populations. In her article titled "From Planned Shrinkage to Formerly Urban: Staking Landscape Architecture's Claim in the Shrinking City Debate," Jill Desimini, Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University, argues that landscape architects have an essential role to play in shaping the future of the shrinking city. After reviewing the shrinking cities literature and several revitalization projects, she suggests that the profession's comfort with designing less intensively used landscapes, understanding of both the re-use potential and ecological value of non-contiguous land, ability to think across geographic scale and long temporal horizons, and willingness to accept maintenance as an integral component of design position landscape architects to generate valuable contributions in re-making formerly urban landscapes.

Taking a cue from Donald Meinig's 1979 essay *The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene*, Ole Russell Sleipness, Clinical Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at Washington State University, examines the depiction of landscapes that promote an idealized green lifestyle in five self-styled sustainable communities in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. In the context of a conceptual framework that is based in marketing theory pertaining to branding, Sleipness uses a grounded theory approach to code the content of text and images presented in promotional literature for these communities. He concludes in his article "Consuming Nature: Paradoxes of 'Green' Development in the Rural Southern Appalachian Mountains" that while intertwined brand narratives presented in this literature reflect consumers' identities, values, and ideals of place identity for a select market of affluent buyers, they also represent competing and perhaps misguided understandings of sustainability.

In "The Sacred Landscape of Braj, India: Imagined, Enacted and Reclaimed," Amita Sinha, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, pursues a phenomenological investigation of place experience involving visual and haptic engagement with the ritual landscape of the sacred Braj region in Northern India. She examines the physical, mental, and spiritual disengagement with the cultural landscape and loss of place-based collective memories associated with disappearing wetlands, neglected water bodies and denuded forest cover at two sacred Braj sites. In writing about these landscapes, Sinha argues that environmental remediation efforts informed by a transcendental view of nature have a greater possibility for success.

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