



## Editorial

## Re-wilding Europe's traditional agricultural landscapes: Values and the link between science and practice



*Landscape and Urban Planning* encourages multiple perspectives and approaches to help understand landscapes as social–ecological systems, with the goal that by building a robust science of landscape we can provide sustainable solutions for guiding its change. But the link between science and practice, or more simply put, between knowledge and action, is not always clear or easy to accomplish, and while multiple perspectives may help build a robust science, they may not always converge on a shared solution.

A prime example of this is illustrated by the two contrasting Perspective Essays by Mauro Agnoletti and Annik Schnitzler featured in this volume that address changing patterns of land use and land cover across rural landscapes of Europe. Various regional and global economic, social, political, technological, and climatic forces have led to significant levels of abandonment of traditional agricultural lands and subsequent replacement by forest growth on a vast scale. Each of the authors, accomplished scholars within their respective disciplines of landscape history and forest ecology, has examined these changes, using the appropriate methods of their science to produce reliable and valid information through careful observation. Yet what they measure and how they interpret what they see leads them to suggest radically different solutions for guiding change: Agnoletti argues for more proactive programs and policies to conserve traditional landscapes, while Schnitzler favors continued forest expansion to renature the European landscape. How can this be so? And, more importantly, how can such important yet divergent perspectives be brought together to guide planners and policymakers? In a Comment on the essays, geographer and former journal editorial board member Marc Antrop suggests that an important reason for the divergence in views lies in how they (and we) understand landscape and the meaning of diversity in the context of landscape. As for what we can do about it, Antrop notes that while the tools of landscape planning can help to identify and integrate resource goals, significant challenges still remain in integrating goals in the policy area, particularly when working across different landscape scales.

As an editor I feel there is value in each perspective and see no conflict in accommodating both of them within the pages of this

journal; Agnoletti and Schnitzler raise important points with solid evidence supporting their positions. How to accommodate their differing perspectives in the landscape is another issue altogether, and as Antrop implies, such multidisciplinary perspectives do not necessarily lead to (and may work against) the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary synthesis required for resolving complex issues. As a social scientist it is also clear to me from the essays that values are an unstated but critical component linking science and practice, knowledge and action: As scientists, our personal and disciplinary values shape what questions we ask and the meaning we find in the data. These values help shape planning and policy, which in turn feed back to science in generating further questions and funding for research. Identifying these values is an important condition for good science and an appropriate role for this journal, and will ultimately contribute to processes of better planning and policy-making.

N.B.: Last year this editorship introduced the Perspective Essay and Comment article types with the goal of facilitating dialog on critical landscape issues that fall within the journal's aims and scope. While single Perspective Essays and Comments on published or to-be published Research Papers have been the standard form to date, the editors hope to facilitate more coordinated efforts such as this in future volumes. Follow-up efforts are another possibility, and critical issues such as this one on abandonment and re-wilding may trigger further discussion, debate, and comparative studies that continue the dialog and enrich our understanding of landscape regeneration strategies across different world regions. We welcome your ideas and participation.

Paul H. Gobster  
 USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station,  
 1033 University Pl., Suite 360, Evanston, IL  
 60201-3172, USA  
 E-mail address: [pgobster@gmail.com](mailto:pgobster@gmail.com)

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