

# *World Views: Five Explorations of Globalisation and Landscape Architecture*

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THE PAPERS INCLUDED in this issue of *Landscape Review* are drawn from the 2007 Globalisation and Landscape Architecture conference (GaLA), held at the St Petersburg State Forest Technical Academy, Russia, which the three of us were involved in convening. Bringing together the terms *globalisation* and *landscape architecture* creates a fruitful arena for discussion about possible landscape futures. Landscape is a site where the cultural and the natural interact, emerging as a compelling tool for examining the complexities of existence. Because it is the setting for life, the familiarity of landscape often means it is taken for granted – as Jala Makhzoumi states later in this issue: ‘because it is “everywhere”, the landscape is ironically invisible’. It is at times of crisis, change or threat to this familiar setting that the examination of landscape becomes most critical. In the discipline of landscape architecture, creativity and problem-solving provide the means of addressing the various collisions, hybridisations, gains and losses that globalisation brings to landscape.

Each of the papers presented in this issue addresses the issue of globalisation and landscape architecture in a different way, and within dramatically diverse contexts – Lebanon, Israel, Portugal and New Zealand. The contexts are, in various ways, peripheral to mainstream landscape architectural discourse, whether geographically or culturally. Two of the papers focus on the studio classroom as an experimental mode in which to imagine alternative futures, in response to pressures of globalisation. The studio classroom setting invited the use of design as a research method – a means of generating new knowledge about a particular problem or situation. Jala Makhzoumi’s studio project in the war-torn landscape of South Lebanon revealed the importance of understanding the local, in order to avoid inappropriate assumptions. For example, a municipal park might be proposed as a landscape solution, but such a setting may not be suited to the lifestyles of the locals. The students in the classroom worked at envisioning landscapes on four sites, which would help in healing and generating scenarios that were sustainable aesthetically, socially, economically and environmentally, with a local perspective. This notion of building resilience is also explored in Penny Allan and Jamie Roberts’ studio project, dealing not in this case with war, but with climate change. The students in this classroom were faced with the scenario of a sea level rise of one to three metres, focussing on four sites in Wellington, New Zealand. Resilience provided the core concept for the studio, as a means for strengthening the underlying system, rather than simply managing the threat.

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EDITORIAL

Related to the mode of the design studio is the design competition. Traditionally design competitions have been crucibles for intense creativity, where designers extend themselves beyond the normal parameters of a brief. The example from Israel discussed by Tal Alon-Mozes in this issue highlights the tensions of landscape architecture when practised globally. The international design competition for the Hiriya landfill resulted in polarised design proposals, which ranged from a global conception of the problem of landfill reclamation and use of generic symbols (such as pastoral idylls) to localised responses that sought out the *genius loci* and reimagined the lost habitats.

Curated exhibitions are another way in which design is used as a mode of research, by generating multiple responses to a scenario. The intense creativity produced by curated exhibitions is exemplified in the iconic Venice Biennale, and reflected in the Trienal de Lisboa held in Portugal, one of the exhibitions that is discussed in the paper by Rute Sousa Matos. The exhibit, *Places and Transitoriness: space, thinking, re-action*, looked in particular at urban voids, which are becoming a global phenomenon. Matos explores the legacy and potential of the urban void, embracing the ambiguity of both the linguistic terminology and the vague spatial realm which characterises these places.

The fifth paper, also from Portugal, explores further the nature of ambiguity, in this case, with an emphasis on the rural, rather than the urban landscape. Drawing on the Council of Europe's explicit recognition of the identity value of landscape, Maria da Conceição Marques Freire examines the setting of Óbidos, a narrow coastline north of Lisbon. Through a close reading of the landscape, Freire speculates on the scales and patterns which are vulnerable to change and the thresholds at which the essence of this particular landscape would be lost. The threats to landscape identity through erasure and homogenisation are some of the most acute faced by landscape architects today. Freire grapples with a means to identify the aspects of landscape which are vital to the local essence and markers of identity, while at the same time recognising that landscape is a dynamic setting.

The landscape investigations in this issue provide a spectrum of ways to negotiate the influence of the global on the local. Perhaps the most important message that is common in each investigation is the imperative of local knowledge. The intimate setting of local areas, in terms of both the bio-physical qualities and the cultural characteristics, represents the landscape architecture. It is necessary to constantly peer through both ends of the telescope, at the vast patterns of flows and forces at a global scale, and at the magnified detail of the local setting, the scale of humanity itself.