

THE ART OF COMPOSING SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES

VOLANTE Summer School –
University of the Aegean, Lesvos
*Transitions in Landscape,
and Land Use*

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OUTLINE

- **General: papers, reviews, structure and content**
- **Experience from Landscape Research**
- **Advice from the Editors**
- **Summary thoughts**



LANDSCAPE RESEARCH - FACTS



International

Peer Review

Published by Routledge Journals

1 Editor; 4 Associate Editors 1 Consulting Editor; 2 Assistant Editors 1 Book Reviews Editor; 1 Editorial Assistant

International Editorial Advisory Board

ISI Abstracts/indices

Encouragement of multi-disciplinary; cross-disciplinary

Approx 6-8 papers per issue

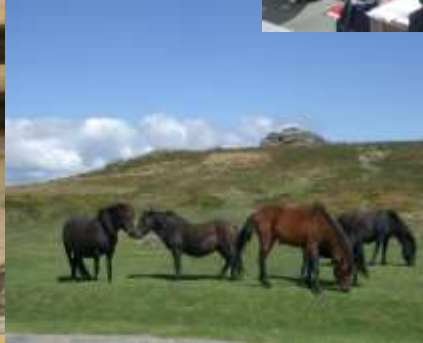
iFirst digital system of pre-publication

6 Issues per year

English language

Digital submission through ScholarOne

Anything interesting?



WHAT IS A RESEARCH PAPER?

‘A research paper is a formal report that contains an original idea (thesis) and evidence to back up your idea (research).’

‘It is a thesis driven exploration of thoughtful reading on a particular subject. The reading material may come from several sources.’

- A piece of written work that combines a systematic review of past research, ‘facts’ from surveys, experiments etc. with interpretive analysis, theoretical development (often) and conclusions.
- Various (more or less) standard formats are often used depending on the discipline

WHY PEER REVIEW?

- Building a collective knowledge base
- Communicating information
- Validating the quality of research
- Distributing rewards (evaluation of academics)
- Building scientific communities – within and between disciplines

Note: new possible forms of reviewing emerging through digital systems, open access, public review etc.




REFEREES AND REVIEWING

- These vary between journals
- LR use a double-blind system (neither the author nor the reviewer know who the other is). Reviewers are unpaid and voluntary
- All indicators are removed that might jeopardise this system
- Some rely on their International Editorial Advisory Board
- Many have a range of academics and others they call upon depending on the subject matter of the paper
- Some journals ask for nominations
- Usually at least 2 blind peer reviewers – often more, particularly in conflicting cases
- Should respond in approximately 6 weeks; often longer
- The Editor's decision is final; there is nothing democratic about this system!

(See also Benson J.F. (2001) 'Inside the Editor's Black Box: 10 Years of the Journal of Environmental Planning & Management,' *JEPM*, 44(1): 3-19)

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF A PAPER?

(IMRAD: introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusion)

- Title
 - Abstract
 - Introduction
 - Literature review
 - Methodology/methods
 - Data
 - Findings
 - Analysis
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion
- Title
 - Abstract
 - Introduction
 - State of the Science/knowledge/
literature
 - Investigation/theoretical
development
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion
- 

PAPER TYPES: TESTING THE WATERS

Paper Type	Characteristics
Short Communication	Excellent for 'testing the waters'; for initial research findings; good literature review with theoretical conclusions; 'think pieces'; quirky subjects.
Standard Research Paper	Opportunities to showcase research once complete; reflect on it; provide significant new knowledge and understanding.
Review Paper	Critical and analytical systematic review of literature leading to theoretical conclusions
Special Issues (Short, Standard, Review)	Can be any of the above types of paper, but focus is clearly on a particular theme.
Book Reviews	A good way of developing your analytical and critical skills and getting yourself on a review list of a journal; good for English language skills development etc.

THE EDITOR

“Editors are craftsmen, ghosts, psychiatrists, bullies, sparring partners, experts, enablers, ignoramuses, translators, writers, goalies, friends, foreman, wimps, ditch diggers, mind readers, coaches, bomb throwers, muses and spittoons – sometimes all while working on the same piece.”

Gary Kamiya, quoted in Marsh, 2007

CHECK JOURNAL STYLE (EDITOR'S POLICY)

Landscape Research Guidelines on Style and Focus

*The journal particularly welcomes contributions which will **appeal to a broad academic and professional readership** and which have a **clear emphasis on research**. The main professional areas of interest are environmental design (landscape architecture, architecture, planning), countryside management, the visual arts, and environmental conservation. Academic areas also include these as well as geography, behavioural studies, cultural studies, archaeology, ecology, art, history and literature. The unifying focus is the landscape. **Authors may write from the viewpoint of one of these interest groups, but in such a way as to communicate their ideas to the journal's interdisciplinary and international audience.***

ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: BASIC UNDERSTANDINGS

- *Make sure your paper is on a topic that sits closely with the interests (aims and scope) of the journal*
- *Also that you have followed the author guidelines meticulously*

Prof. Paul Selman, former Editor of LR



ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: WHAT MAKES A GOOD PAPER?

- *A clear and specific argument*
- *A clear and logical structure*
- *Something that is well-written and well-crafted*
- *Something that leaves the reader with a feeling that they have actually learned something*

Prof. Simin Davoudi
Editor, JEPM

- Clarity
- Logical argument
- Knowledge there to be understood
- Knowledge able to be understood
- Professional

ADVICE FROM THE EDITORS: BASICS - STRUCTURE

- *Don't rush the writing of the abstract - often these are written last and in a rush but it is the first thing that editors and potential reviewers often see (unless it is Elsevier of course with their horrible 5 highlights)*
- *Make sure the paper has a good introduction - the introduction will usually introduce the problem and how this paper is going to help use/better understand/ better address the problem.*
- *Make sure the paper has a good conclusion which clearly demonstrates how the original research has added to the international literature on the subject.*

Dr Neil Powe, Editor JEPM

- *Tells an interesting story. There is a clear and overarching purpose to the paper, and that purpose is so clear in the author's mind that they tell it with lucidity and conclusiveness.*

Prof. Paul Selman, former Editor LR

- Work out structure in advance: look at other papers.
- Don't forget Abstract & Keywords
- Provide a punchy beginning (say why it is interesting)
- Provide a clear and concise conclusion.
- Like a good story – consider beginning, middle, end.
- Ask yourself: what DO you want to say?

ADVICE FROM THE EDITORS: BASICS - CONTENT

- *What new or different perspectives or critique does the paper address if it's a well trodden topic? Nothing is more irritating than an author who claims this is new approach and not been done before, when rigorous review of literature and work in the area would reveal it is not new.*
- *Is the paper focused on theoretical matters or practice and if the latter what theoretical underpinnings are included?*

*Prof. Ken Taylor,
Associate Editor LR*

- Methods based on 'old' papers with no new thinking or rationales will not get published
- Remember the age-group of most Editors; many have long memories and certainly have prejudices

ADVICE FROM THE EDITORS: BASICS - CONTENT

- *An abstract or summary that grabs my attention in that it sets out what the paper is about, why it is significant and therefore publishable, and relates to the title.*
- *Is the paper focused on theoretical matters or practice and if the latter what theoretical underpinnings are included?*
- *If at end I get feeling of So What, what is the paper trying to say, then it's already in low acceptance box.*

*Prof. Ken Taylor,
Associate Editor LR*

- *The paper makes a clear an original contribution, either by new evidence or independent critical insight. Too often I find myself reviewing a paper and thinking 'but what did they actually do'? Sometimes authors will then re-write it in a way which much more clearly sets out their aims, methods, results, and original findings. A pity they couldn't have done that first time round.*

Prof. Paul Selman, former Editor LR

- All parts of the paper should be relevant to the argument and of high quality
- Ask yourself the 'So What?' question about your own work.

ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: BASICS - CONTENT

- *Set the research in the context of the international literature - as such the problem should not be a problem for the case study as such but instead a problem with broader relevance which is a problem addressed within the international literature*
- *Ultimately reviewers are measuring the quality of the paper against its contribution to the international literature on the subject - if it doesn't make a measurable and clearly identified contribution it will usually be rejected.*

Dr Neil Powe, Editor JEPM

- *Shows an awareness of other literature and context (e.g. policy), and shows how the current paper builds on previous knowledge.*

Prof. Paul Selman, former Editor LR

- Look at the criteria for selection – usually the significance/new knowledge
- Case studies applying well-rehearsed methods in new places will not get published in peer review journals

THINK HOLISTICALLY ABOUT THE PAPER

“Tying the research to the relevant literature helps to construct and show your conceptual framework. ‘This is not just a matter of recognizing one’s intellectual debts. More importantly, this literature can provide a wealth of intellectual and practical guidance in conducting the research. [R]esearch deals with a host of important, complex and difficult topics and needs to draw on as much of the relevant literature as possible to insure that the research is as rigorous and intellectually sound as it can be.’”

Richard Klosterman

New scholars’ workshop review
in: Christensen, 2006.

METHODS IN TRADITIONAL RESEARCH REPORTING


*“Explain what evidence and research methods are appropriate for your research question and why. Then explain what data you collected, sources, how you sampled, how you collected it, how you coded it, and how you analyzed it. **Demonstrate that your methods are ‘explicit, sound and appropriate’.** If you believe you need to explain highly technical methods, present them briefly in the text and provide more information and references to further detailed explanations in an appendix. Discuss any limitations, drawbacks or possible biases in your methodology and what you did to correct or compensate for the problem.”*

(The Scholarly Paper, JPER Co-Editor, Christensen, 2006)




METHODS IN PAPERS - GENERAL

Objectives of stating methods:

- To inform about the approach to the research question
 - Explain the design of the study
 - Provide enough information to understand, evaluate and potentially replicate the study
 - To communicate research results clearly
- 

EXAMINATION OF METHODS:

Key Issues:

- Robust methods = indicator of quality of research (*but not necessarily quality of paper*)
 - Methods = justification of research basis
 - Any doubts about methodology = immediate rejection
 - Methods quality = indication of clarity of thinking
- 

LANDSCAPE RESEARCH SURVEY 2009

Paper Type/methods type	Methods Reporting
Cognitive/perception studies; landscape ecology studies; ethnographic studies; land cover analyses; behavioural studies; preference studies; landscape biography; discourse analysis; landscape change studies; content analysis; review papers; interpretive analysis; policy analysis.	'Methods/Methodology/Methods & Materials' sections 10 lines to 3.5 pages (Total pages =15-20 approx./4-7K words)
Ethnographic studies; cultural studies; position papers	General description Objectives/focus/purpose set out;
Methodology paper	Critique throughout paper

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH - METHODS

Methods in cross-disciplinary are of particular interest; these should:

- Match with the objectives and the results and be appropriate to research question
- Provide clear insights into methodological and conceptual steps
- Consider whether methods may be of interest in themselves
- Be flexible in recognition of reporting (not necessarily IMRAD)
- Be understandable by the journal readership therefore needs to be understandable by other disciplines
- Avoid jargon, particularly disciplinary jargon

ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: BASIC UNDERSTANDINGS

- *Most papers get rejected - if you get rejected it is the norm and try and learn from the process and submit the paper elsewhere*
- *Papers first have to get past the editor so they have to meet basic editorial standards.*

Dr Neil Powe, Editor JEPM

- Last month LR had a 94% rejection rate for papers; 75% for the whole of the previous year.
- Reject may not always mean ‘go away’; different journals have different categories of rejection:
 - Reject (terrible paper; go away)
 - Reject (English so bad I can’t understand it)
 - Reject (no new knowledge; not interesting)
 - Reject (possibly interesting, but poorly structured; try harder and resubmit)

ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: HOW CAN YOU MAKE A GOOD PAPER?

- *Do paragraphs link together logically to give sense of flow?*

Prof. Ken Taylor, Associate Editor LR

- *Try and write English which is clear and concise. You are writing to be understood, not to prove how clever you are.*
- *Write in the active not the passive mood. In particular do not use the construction 'It is interesting to note that' or similar, where the 'it' has nothing to which it refers! Generally speaking the whole phrase can be lost without disturbing the meaning*
- *When you are looking for cuts, it is usually the paragraphs just before the end which can be ditched...*

.....'and another thing I should have mentioned ...'

Prof. Peter Howard, former Editor of LR

- Clarity
- Concise – make sure you adhere to the WORD LIMIT of the journal according to paper type

ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: HOW CAN YOU MAKE A GOOD PAPER?

- *Good English is important, but obviously concessions have to be made to authors writing in a second language.*

Prof Paul Selman, former Editor LR

- *Try your paper out on a friend. You will probably find the right places where an example is needed, or will clarify complex ideas.*

Prof. Peter Howard, former Editor LR

- *If you are worried about your English get it proof read before submitting or at least key parts of it - the editor may or may not be sympathetic to writing in their second language but reviewers of all nationalities are really turned off by papers with poor English.*

Dr Neil Powe, Editor JEPM

- Poor English often produces something difficult to read
- Test – find a READER who you trust; find two!
- If English is not your native language, GET THE PAPER PROOF READ for language before submission.
- Do not expect the Editor to proof read your paper!

CLARITY OF THINKING: LANGUAGE

“When *I* use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone. “it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things”.

Lewis Carroll,

Through the Looking Glass and what Alice found there,
Harmondsworth, Penguin (1872; 1950 reprint p.116)

CLARITY OF MEANING

“Colourless green ideas sleep furiously”

(Chomsky, 1957)

- Consider the meaning of the words you are using:
- What is the context?
- What is the audience?
- *What are you trying to say?*
- It may be grammatical, but it may also be devoid of meaning.....’

PLAIN ENGLISH

“Say all you have to say in the fewest possible words, or your reader will be sure to skip them; and in the plainest possible words or he will certainly misunderstand them.”

John Ruskin (1819 - 1900)

“Plain speaking should not...be confused with over-simplification.”

Heather Campbell, 2003:390



CLARITY OF LANGUAGE REFLECTS CLARITY OF THINKING: JARGON BUSTING

“I react against the trend for several reasons, but mainly because it is fuzzy, it is sometimes patronising, and because this jargon externalises and objectifies landscapes and the people living in them. We talk about actors, stakeholders, customers, cross-compliance payments, sectoral targets, and we engage in optionalising, foresighting, outreaching, rightsizing, clustering and consensual reporting. Oh for simple, direct language and a drastic reduction of euphemisms!”

Gary Fry, 2001

ADVICE FROM THE EDITORS: CLARITY OF DATA - THE USE AND QUALITY OF FIGURES, TABLES ETC.

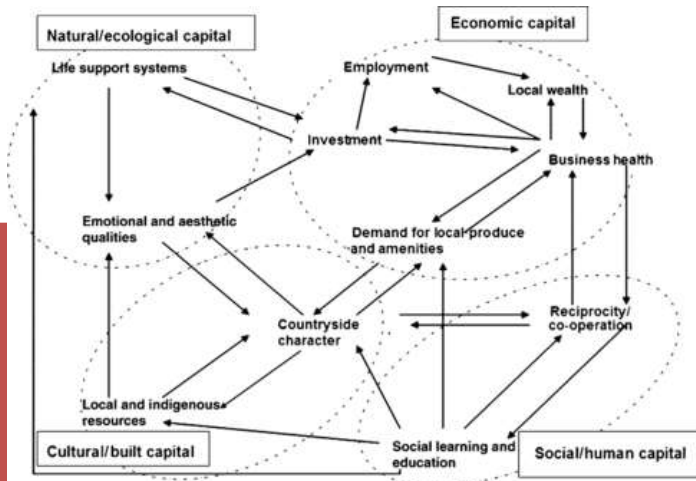
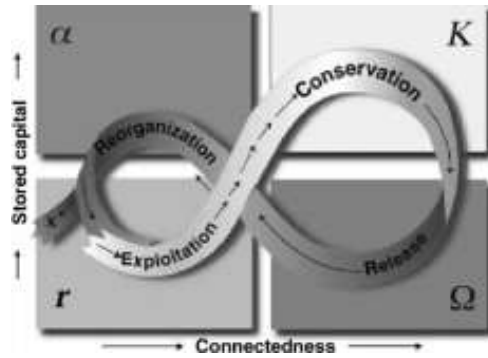
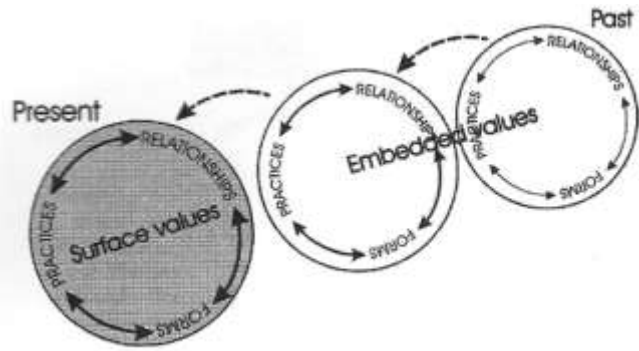
- *Will your illustrations, tables, maps etc. be readable at the scale used for the journal? In the case of colour pictures, always do a black and white photocopy to see if there is enough contrast for use as a b/w illustration.*

Prof. Peter Howard

- *Judicious use of tables, figures and photos helps - nothing superfluous, but just sufficient to make key data readily assimilable.*

Prof. Paul Selman

- Are figures necessary?
- Do they provide more information? Consider them as a communication tool not decoration.
- How will they reproduce?
- Quality of figures can provide an indicator of the quality of the paper and care taken by the author(s)



ADVICE OF THE EDITORS: VOICES OF THE RESEARCH

- *When dealing with qualitative data (for example interviews) there should be a balance between your analysis of the respondents' views, and allowing their own voices to be heard.*

Prof. Peter Howard,
former Editor of LR

- Ethical issues – do these come through in the style of writing?
- Do the ‘voices’ of the researched come through?
- Use quotations, but not endless paragraphs of reported speech.
- Does your voice come through?

STYLE: YOUR 'VOICE'

- Most research papers are not conversations
....*But* you want to 'engage' the reader in the research because most reviewers have lots of reading to do.....
- Some disciplines may prefer to see the researcher reflected in the research through the style of reporting, but most readers don't care about your impressions or feelings they want to be stimulated to think or simply gain knowledge/understanding
....*But* a little passion about your subject doesn't hurt
- Voice should be linked clearly to methods
...So use 'I' only when the 'I' matters in the research

LETTER TO REVIEWERS:

INSTRUCTIONS TO REVIEWERS:

The four main criteria for evaluation are:

- (a) Quality and content of the research/review,
- (b) Quality, appropriate length and clarity of presentation,
- (c) Significance, relevance and timeliness of the topic, and
- (d) Appeal to the readership of Landscape Research which is a cross-disciplinary journal focussed upon issues related to the study of the landscape.

Please provide an overall evaluation based on these criteria, followed by detailed comments or suggestions for revision. Your specific comments will offer valuable feedback to the authors to assist them in improving future work.

RESPONDING TO REVIEWERS:

PAPER REFERENCE NUMBER:

Responses to Referees' comments:

We would like to thank the referees for their constructive and useful comments. We have considered these carefully and altered the text accordingly. Specific responses are provided in relation to comments given by each referee below.

Referee: 1

Comments to the Author

This is a well written article on an interesting topic. However,

Thank you for these comments. We have expanded our information on the NE case study and provided an extra table with the original questions developed in that case.

It would also be useful to be told more about

We have added some detail about the Ely site and will be providing a redrawn version of the Figure.

I would like to see some reference to other factors, such as I.....and

Land ownership was not a key factor in the issues we are focusing on in the paper, thus although we do have this information, we have not expanded upon this in order to try and keep to the word limit. We have acknowledged that the possible future change in nature conservation interests.

CASE STUDY PAPER

CLAR-2011-0032.R3

Submitted: 02-Dec-2012; Last Updated: 03-Jan-2013; 32 days, 4 hours in review

Landscapes of threat? Exploring discourses of stigma around large energy developments

Parkhill, Karen (contact); Butler, Catherine; Pidgeon, Nick

Originally submitted as a special issue paper. This was abandoned. Paper then went through a number of revisions including 'too long' and 'language too difficult'. Interesting content, novel and good lit review identified by reviewers.

Accepted January 2013



REFLECTIONS

'Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.'

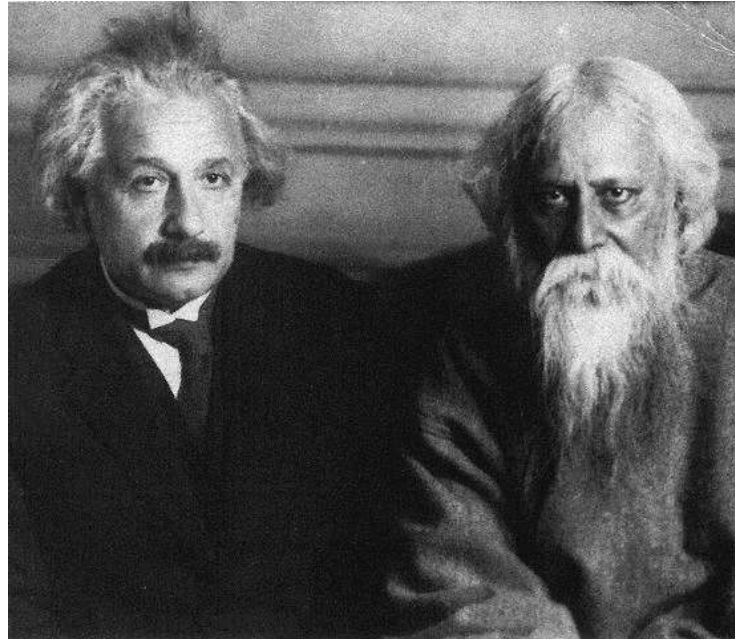
Strunk & White, 1979

- Get advice!
- Prepare for writing; devise a publishing strategy
- Find a 'reader'
- Investigate the journal carefully
- Stick clearly to journal guidance
- Brevity is best and no jargon!
- Consider titles, subheadings, keywords, abstracts carefully
- Style & language should be linked to methods used
- Consider approach to Editor and Reviewers
- Editors are generally friendly even if reviewers may be toughbut Editors are also busy!
- It takes a lot of work, and a long time.

PAPERS AS COMMUNICATION: REFLECTING INSPIRATION, ENSURING COMMUNICATION

“When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking.”

Tagore



“Theoretical knowledge is not enough, it has to be communicated and shared...To disseminate knowledge Tagore not only laid emphasis on seminar, library, research and training but also on fairs and festivals, recreation and village organisation”

Ray et al., 2005:98

Einstein & Tagore

THANKS

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