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Toward a landscape ecological aesthetic: methodologies for designers and planners

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Abstract

Landscape ecology involves the study of structure, function and change in landscape. Landscape, as defined in landscape ecology, consist of repeated groupings of interacting ecosystems which have a strong visual identity. In landscape ecology this sense of identity reaches beyond the concept of repeated visual structure to encompass units of cultural identity as well. The fact that biologists have entered into this new discipline with designers and planners means that an area of ecological concern, biodiversity, can be addressed by practicing professionals in a way which combines the science of ecology with the art of planning. From the perspective of landscape ecology, the issue of biodiversity should logically be extended to include consideration of human cultural diversity also. We refer to this integrated set of concerns collectively as issues in landscape ecological integrity. Given the interest of designers in this field, an opportunity exists to combine issues of landscape ecological integrity with issues of aesthetic appeal

including appeals to the senses, to our emotions and feelings and finally to our sense of symbolic meaning invoked by perceptions of caring and stewardship. These considerations have led to the realization that traditional ecological planning has not evaluated the importance of spatial configuration and temporal sequencing in land use decisions. Because the heart of landscape ecology is the evaluation of spatial configuration and temporal sequencing as they affect landscape ecological integrity and aesthetic appeal, we believe it is the logical discipline within which to elaborate the union of these issues. We have called this union "the landscape ecological aesthetic"™.



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