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## Forty years of *Landscape Research*

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### ABSTRACT

Papers of four decades published in *Landscape Research* are reviewed in order to chronicle the journal's development and to assess the academic performance of the journal relative to its own aims. *Landscape Research* intends to reach a wide audience, to have a broad thematic coverage and to publish different types of papers with various methodological orientations. Cutting across these first aims are the interdisciplinary ambition of the journal, and its overall focus on landscape. These aims are evaluated based upon categorisation of article content, authorship and methodology, using data derived through interpretative inquiry and quantitative analyses. The results tell the story of how *Landscape Research* has developed from a newsletter of the Landscape Research Group, mainly aimed at practitioners, into an interdisciplinary, international journal with academic researchers as its primary community of interest. The final section discusses the current profile of the journal and identifies issues for its future direction and development.

### KEYWORDS

Academic journal; history of landscape studies; *Landscape Research*; Landscape Research Group; research strategies

## 1. Introduction

*Landscape Research* is the journal of the Landscape Research Group (LRG). The first issue published under its current name in Winter 1976 contains a modest but illuminating editorial by the then editor, Ian C. Laurie. Referring to the change of name from *Landscape Research News* to *Landscape Research*, he notes:

[...] the change reflects more clearly the main aim of the publication: to print short papers which can draw the reader's attention to research studies in a number of different subject areas, but which all have a common interest in the changing processes and activities which control the landscape. It is our intention to give equal attention to studies concerned with design and management, and to landscape planning and landscape science. This is based on the recognition that the study of the landscape is not contained within any one discipline or profession or even within any two or three of them.

Thus, 'landscape' was understood as an integrative concept from the very beginning of the journal, and recognised as the subject matter of many disciplines and professions. The journal is conceived as multidisciplinary in that a common topic is addressed drawing on knowledge from disciplinary-specific bases (Choi & Pak, 2006, p. 359). This integrative mission remains applicable to *Landscape Research* today. However, emphasis has shifted from multi- to interdisciplinarity, understood in this context as an approach that 'analyzes, synthesises and harmonises links between disciplines in a coordinated

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and coherent whole' (Choi & Pak, 2006, p. 359). As the current wording of the journal's 'Aims & Scope' (Landscape Research, 2015) explains:

*Landscape Research* is distinctive in combining original research papers with reflective critiques of landscape practice. Contributions to the journal appeal to a wide academic and professional readership, and reach an interdisciplinary and international audience. Whilst unified by a focus on the landscape, the coverage of *Landscape Research* is wide ranging.

We use this occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Landscape Research* as an academic journal to review the profile of papers published in the journal over the past four decades. Our aims are to chronicle the journal's development, and to assess the academic performance of the journal relative to its own goals, as laid out in the journal's 'Aims & Scope'. While the wording and emphasis have changed over the years, five objectives are of continuing importance: *Landscape Research* promises to reach a wide audience, to have wide thematic coverage, to publish different types of papers with various methodological orientations and to be interdisciplinary while keeping an overall focus on landscape. We hope that the insights gained through our inquiry can inform the future direction of *Landscape Research* and help ensure its continuing relevance and success.

It is a challenge to assess the extent to which the journal has achieved its goals. In particular, it is impossible to measure the type of readership without undertaking a major marketing survey. Instead, we have turned the argument around and analysed the journal's authors, on the assumption that papers from a diverse authorship—in terms of geographical location, gender, disciplinary background and type of affiliation—are also more likely to appeal to a diverse audience. We have assessed the journal's thematic coverage by an analysis of the content of papers, and we have used an analysis of their research strategies to assess the extent to which *Landscape Research* has recognised diverse methodological orientations. These findings are synthesised and evaluated to see how well the journal has lived up to its intended interdisciplinary scope and focus on landscape.

The review is designed as a mixed-method approach: it is an interpretive inquiry complemented by quantitative analysis of paper content, authorship and methodology. The quantitative analysis examines 788 full-length research papers published since the winter issue in 1976 (vol. 2) up to and including the final issue in 2014 (vol. 39, issue 6). It excludes other content such as book reviews, conference reports, news from the LRG, photo essays or editorials. The focus of the analysis upon research papers has thus excluded other types of content that may contribute to understanding and scholarship of landscape. However to ensure consistency in analysis, we only included content that is clearly signalled by the editorial label of 'research'. The scope of the survey is therefore defined by the later editorial policy of the journal itself. The main purpose of the quantitative analysis was to identify broad trends. In order to track development over time, we grouped papers together in five years periods and compared the profiles of these periods. Further details of the analysis will be given below.

Recounting the history of *Landscape Research* through a review of its research papers provides interesting insights, especially regarding the development of certain ideas and approaches in the field. Our account does not examine the details of the journal's editorial history, such as the different editors' perspectives, the link with the LRG or the wider evolving context of how research has been reported in the discipline. We have however used our contextual knowledge of the journal along with analysis of editorials to inform the interpretation, and in Section 2 we provide a brief overview of the changing publishing context. The paper has also been reviewed in draft by several scholars with long-standing involvement in the journal (see acknowledgements), prior to peer review.

Sections 3–7 examine the degree to which the journal has lived up to its ambitions, with reference to: authorship as an indicator of a diverse audience (Section 4); breadth of thematic coverage (Section 5); diversity of methodological approach (Section 6) and evidence of interdisciplinarity (Section 7). The paper concludes with an overview of the overall results and identifies some questions for the future direction of *Landscape Research* (Section 8).

## 2. Changing publishing context

The LRG is a charity based and registered in the United Kingdom (UK). It was founded in 1967 to 'promote research into certain aspects of landscape' (Chairman of the Executive Committee, 1968, p. 1). This objective was slightly refined by adding the words 'for the public benefit' when the Group was formally constituted as a charity in 1983 (Shuttleworth, 1983). The LRG set up a newsletter under the name *Landscape Research News* in 1968 to offer 'a forum for the exchange of information between all those whose work may be concerned in some way with the landscape as human environment' (*Landscape Research News*, 1968). An explicitly international scope is mentioned in 1974, when the then editor, Ian C. Laurie, expressed hope that 'more material will be obtained from this and other countries, particularly Germany and the United States, where there is much research work which we do not always hear about in this country' (Laurie, 1974, p. 12). *Landscape Research News* changed its name to *Landscape Research* in 1976 to reflect more clearly the main aim of the journal to foster multidisciplinary discourse by disseminating the results of 'research studies' on landscape.

In winter 1988, the LRG re-introduced a newsletter for its individual members under the title *Landscape Research Extra*. LRG decided this was necessary because *Landscape Research's* evolution into a more established academic journal meant that it was less able to act as a conduit for LRG's internal news and conversations—and this in turn had implications for the role and format of *Landscape Research* itself. From this time onwards, news such as announcements of conferences appeared in the newsletter, which allowed *Landscape Research* to further evolve as an international, academic and peer-reviewed journal. This functional differentiation is clearly visible in the description of the contributions welcomed for publication in the journal from 1992 (see Table 1), when a referee system is mentioned explicitly for the first time (*Landscape Research*, 1992). While this differed from the review system used by journals now, it did involve determinedly double-blind review by at least one advisor (pers. comm. from Peter Howard, 13 February 2015).

In 1996, *Landscape Research* underwent a second significant shift as a result of LRG's decision that the best way to expand the journal further was to enter into agreement with a commercial publisher, rather than publishing independently. Volume 21 was the first published by Carfax. Burgess (1996, p. 5) suggested that the journal had now 'come of age'. Two years later, in 1998, Taylor & Francis purchased

**Table 1.** Overview of the changes in *Landscape Research's* aims and scopes, types and lengths of contributions.

Volume (No.)	Year	Types of contributions invited for publication	Requested article length
1 (1)	1968	'Research notes', 'Publications', 'Correspondence', 'Diary' (LR 1.1)	'brief' (LR 1.1)
1 (7)	1974	'short research reports, summaries, letters. Criticism and suggestions would be carefully considered' (p. 12)	500–2000 words (p. 12)
2 (3)	1977	'contributions [...] including short research reports, and summaries and letters' (p. 24)	500–3000 words (p. 24)
6 (3)	1981	'research articles, notes, reviews and reports' (p. ebi)	3000–6000 words (articles); 1,000–2,000 words (notes) (p. ebi)
17 (1)	1992	'Research articles, which are refereed', 'Other contributions' which can be 'literary, photographic or artistic'; 'Notices of events, reviews, short topical pieces are welcomed by the editor of <i>Landscape Research Extra</i> ' (p. ebi).	'usually not more than 6000 words and often very much shorter' (LR 17.1, p. ebi)
39	2014	'Standard Research Papers', 'Critical Review Articles', 'Special Issue Papers', 'Book Reviews' (Notes for Contributors in print version); 'original research papers' or 'reflective critiques of landscape practice' (LR website, 2014–11-29)	'A typical manuscript will not exceed 7000 words including references, captions and endnotes' (Taylor & Francis Online, 2014, Instructions for authors)'submissions of all types should be between 3000–7000 words; book reviews are invited and range between 600–900 words (Notes for Contributors in print version)

**Table 2.** Editors of *Landscape Research* and its predecessor *Landscape Research News*

Title	Date	Vol.	Issue	Editor	Editor's affiliation
Landscape Research News	1968–1971	1	1–3	Alan Murray	Central Electricity Generating Board
Landscape Research News	1971		3	Michael Ellison	Property Services Agency
Landscape Research News	1972–1973		4–5	John Whittow	Department of Geography, University of Reading, UK
Landscape Research News	1973–1976		6–12	Ian C. Laurie	Department of Town & Country Planning, Manchester University, UK
Landscape Research	1976–1979	2–4		Ian C. Laurie	Department of Town & Country Planning, Manchester University, UK
Landscape Research	1980–1985	5–10		Ian Brotherton	Department of Landscape Architecture, Sheffield University, UK
Landscape Research	1986–1993	11–18		Peter Howard	Exeter College of Art & Design, UK
Landscape Research	1994–2003	19–28		Paul Selman	Countryside and Community Research Unit, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, UK
Landscape Research	2004–2008	29–33		Ian H. Thompson	School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK
Landscape Research	2009–2013	34–38		Maggie Roe	School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK
Landscape Research	2014–	39–		Anna Jorgensen	Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield, UK

Source: Roe, 2009, p. 2; written communication by Steven Shuttleworth, 11 Jan 2015.

Routledge, which included Carfax (Munroe, 2007), and *Landscape Research* now forms part of the extensive range of Routledge Journals published by the Taylor and Francis Group. However, the journal continues to be owned by the LRG, and the copyright also belongs to the group (pers. comm. from Steven Shuttleworth, 11 January 2015).

Seven editors have helped shape the content and character of *Landscape Research* (see Table 2), with editorial periods that have varied between four and nine years. The editor of *Landscape Research* is required to be a member of the Board of Directors of the LRG, and has always been considered as one of the group's five key officers (along with the Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary). The editor is appointed by the Board; and some appointments were made with a conscious intent to shift direction in terms of journal content (pers. comm. from Steven Shuttleworth, 11 January 2015). While UK-based, the LRG board has been internationalised over the past decade, as has *Landscape Research's* editorial team and editorial advisory board. The appointment of associate editors in the early 2000s was intended to widen the geographic origin of papers. Section 3 considers how successful this internationalisation strategy has been.

Over time, there have been significant changes in the number of pages per issue (from 16 in 1976 to an average of 120 in 2014), in issues per volume (see Table 3) and in the average paper length (from 3 pages in 1980 via 15 pages in 1996 to approximately 18 pages per paper in volume 39 in 2014). While

Volume	Year	Number of issues per volume
1	1968–1976	12
2	1976–1977	3
3–25	1978–2000	3
26–31	2001–2006	4
32–34	2007–2009	5
35–39	2010–2014	6
40–	2015–	8

the number of papers per issue has remained relatively stable, the type and nature of contributions invited for publication have also changed over time (Table 1). The effects of this are assessed in the following sections.

The Peak District in the UK is an example of a particular landscape which has been discussed in every decade of the journal's history. Examination of the relevant papers illustrates a significant change. In 1978, a short paper titled *Landscape planning in the Peak District* (Parker, 1978) was published. It presented a recently issued park plan, with a handful of references which were all reports or plans produced by various organisations or governmental bodies in England and Wales. This practice-orientated paper provides a typical example of a paper from the mid-1970s. In 1981, another short paper presented a survey of landscape preferences in the National Park, with particular focus on differences between lay and professional people (Bromley, 1981), supported by a dozen references from leading journals and four charts with statistical analysis summarising the results. In 1994, a paper presenting a survey on footpath management in national parks (Ruff & Maddison, 1994) included reference to the Peak District. With eight pages, an abstract and 19 references, the paper is more like contemporary contributions, though it lacks the methodological discussion or ambition to develop theory or methodology that characterises many more recent submissions.

By 2005, the requirement for explicit contextual and methodological justification for the findings in papers is more evident. Riley (2005) introduces his paper—consisting of 20 pages, a map, two photographs and excerpts from interviews—with a discussion of the past 25 years of *Landscape Research*, tying his account into previous discussions of agriculture and the British landscape. While the earlier papers in the 1970s and 1980s only summarise their research results briefly, Riley tells a rich story of a landscape. The two most recent papers on the Peak District add to the picture of an international discourse in which methods and theories are made explicit, and where there is an ambition to make a theoretical contribution (Park, Jorgensen, Selman, & Swanwick, 2008; Warnock & Griffiths, 2014).

The changing length and content of the papers relating to the Peak District trace, over the four decades, an increasing focus upon theory construction and explicit description of the research process and methodology, which characterises an academic as opposed to a professional journal. We return to the question of orientation in Section 8.

### 3. Landscape as a unifying focus?

While landscape is the theme that unites papers in the journal, there is no consensus on how landscape should or might be conceptualised, studied or how papers should be presented for publication. *Landscape Research* has throughout the years declared itself open to different perspectives. From issue No. 3 in 1981 until 1991, the very concise notes to contributors state that papers in the journal 'may cover any aspect of landscape research, landscape being interpreted in its broadest possible way'. The first issue (1981, No. 3) with this statement is a special issue concerned with urban nature. An early trademark of the journal was the wish to cover new aspects of landscape research and to capture new themes within environmental discourse with relevance for landscape planning. The following issue (1982, No. 1), on English landscape parks, captures two of the strong themes of the journal: parks and history. Traditional themes have been maintained while new topics have been introduced; the journal has expanded thematically rather than shifted focus. Despite the bold call for *any* interpretation of landscape, there were only a few contributions before the mid-1980s that analysed the concept 'landscape' as such or brought in new theoretical perspectives on how to understand landscapes. One of the earliest topics which helped to expand approaches was the development of new understandings of landscape preferences, with Jay Appleton as a frequent contributor (e.g., Appleton, 1976, 1982, 1994). However, it was the 'cultural turn' that emerges most strongly from the analysis of papers.

Peter Howard was editor during the early years of what later became known as the new cultural geography (e.g., Cresswell, 2010; Wylie, 2007). An emerging interest in conceptual discourses, representations and ideologies of landscape within the humanities and social sciences entered *Landscape Research* through 'that arty stuff' (Howard, 1993, p. 55) (as Howard refers to contributions based in art,

**Table 4.** Analysis of the content of papers published in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 by five-year period.

	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2014	1976–2014
	<i>n</i> = 58 [%]	<i>n</i> = 83 [%]	<i>n</i> = 78 [%]	<i>n</i> = 76 [%]	<i>n</i> = 85 [%]	<i>n</i> = 115 [%]	<i>n</i> = 144 [%]	<i>n</i> = 149 [%]	<i>n</i> = 788 [%]
Landscape planning and ecology <sup>a</sup>	52	31	21	5	47	30	34	30	31
History and culture <sup>b</sup>	7	16	38	30	21	29	19	15	22
Human and environment relationships <sup>c</sup>	5	2	10	12	13	17	22	28	16
Sustainability; perception <sup>d</sup>	29	27	8	28	9	3	10	14	14
Urban design <sup>e</sup>	0	10	12	0	2	3	7	3	5
Landscape design and implementation <sup>f</sup>	2	8	9	7	2	4	3	5	5
Design theory, methods of inquiry <sup>g</sup>	2	4	1	7	2	8	3	4	4
Communication and visualisation <sup>h</sup>	2	2	1	8	2	3	1	1	3
Design education and pedagogy <sup>i</sup>	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Landscape architecture profession <sup>j</sup>	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	1

<sup>a</sup>Landscape survey. Landscape Change. Landscape planning models and methodologies. Heritage and conservation planning. Policy. Ecological surveys and modelling.

<sup>b</sup>Archaeology. Histories of individual sites and cultural landscapes. History of heritage and conservation. Visual arts.

<sup>c</sup>Landscape usage and meaning. Health and wellbeing. Impact of inter-personal differences on experience of landscape. Urban and ex-urban contexts.

<sup>d</sup>All forms of landscape assessment e.g., Landscape Character Assessment. Preference studies (including visualisation where linked to preference). Economic valuation.

<sup>e</sup>Urban morphology. Infrastructure. Urban sprawl. Public green and open space. Architecture.

<sup>f</sup>Design case studies. Design technologies, planting and materials.

<sup>g</sup>All types of theory and research methodology.

<sup>h</sup>Mapping and visualisation (where linked to proposals for landscape change).

<sup>i</sup>Landscape education: theory and case studies.

<sup>j</sup>Scope and ethics of landscape architecture.

art history, literature and the history of ideas, picking up a phrase coined by Steven Shuttleworth at a LRG Board meeting). Table 4 shows the issues between 1986 and 1995 were particularly strong in papers on history and culture. Authors with affiliations to departments of behavioural and cultural studies also peaked during this period, accounting for more than 25% of all papers. In the 1990s, this 'cultural turn' developed further with the introduction of a 'critical' approach that began to explore the ideological positions behind differing interpretations of 'landscape' (Cosgrove, 1990; Matless, 1997).

It was also from the late 1990s onwards that the journal more fully captured the breadth of the field, concerning both the topics studied and conceptualisations of landscape. This is illustrated with the cross-cutting theme of landscape studies of roads. There are 17 papers that mention 'road' in their abstract (and not as a metaphor), with studies covering twelve countries and three continents. Thematically, the papers cover landscape ecological studies of biotope fragmentation and connectivity (3), visibility and spatial patterns (2), landscape preferences and perceptions (2), political driving forces for landscape change (1), an iconographic study of military landscapes (1), a micro-study of the everyday decision-making of commuters (1), the biodiversity of hedgerows (1), traffic pollution and roadside plants (1), infrastructure and power (1) a conceptual and historical approach (1), the road or 'avenue' in art and literature (1), landscape and planning history involving roads (1), a narrative study of conceptions of mobility and identity (1), and a systematisation of the cultural heritage of roads (1). *Landscape Research* is perhaps unique in accepting such a variety, and yet all these aspects contribute to a richer understanding of the road as a landscape phenomenon.

An important question, however, is to what extent these studies are complementary, contradictory, or if they are too different to even be brought into a common discussion. Arguably, the variety of perspectives all add to collective understanding of the road as a landscape phenomenon. However, while *Landscape Research* offers a rare single platform for research papers based on such different landscape perspectives, its potential to reflect on these different understandings and advance interdisciplinary landscape research is not always used. In the papers mentioned above, cross-references are minimal, averaging only one reference each to a previous paper in *Landscape Research*. While pertinent papers in previous issues may not always be relevant, this contributes little to developing an internal discourse within the journal. Similarly, none of the previously mentioned studies of the Peak District, including Riley (2005), refer to previously published journal papers. This suggests that the mutual and cumulative learning process that characterises a community of researchers is not well-established across all the thematic subject areas within the journal—an issue we will come back to in our conclusion.

#### 4. Appeal to a wide readership?

This section assesses the degree to which *Landscape Research* has lived up to its own ambitions to 'appeal to a wide academic and professional readership and [to] reach an interdisciplinary and international audience' (Landscape Research, 2015). As explained previously, we assess appeal to readership indirectly via an analysis of authorship. This indicates a steady and considerable increase in the range of countries

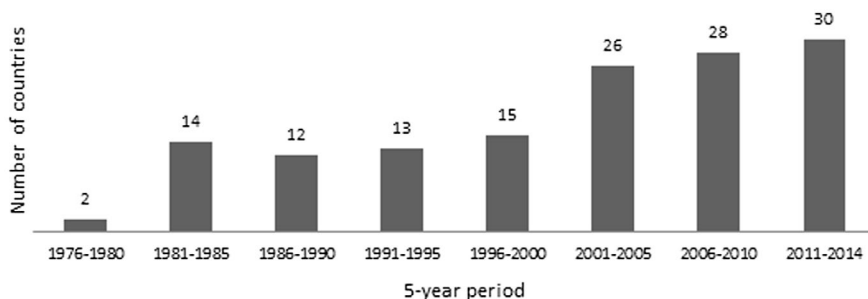


Figure 1. Development of the number of countries of paper origin in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 by five-year period.



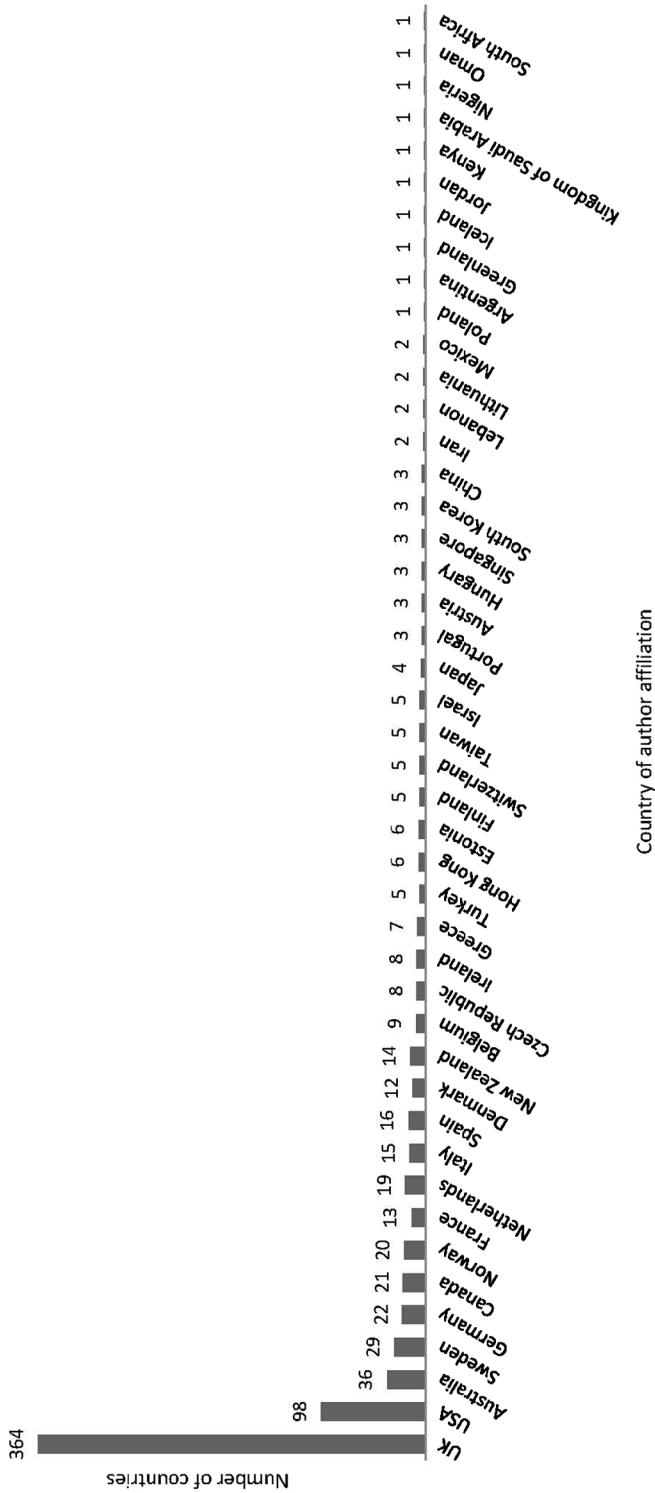
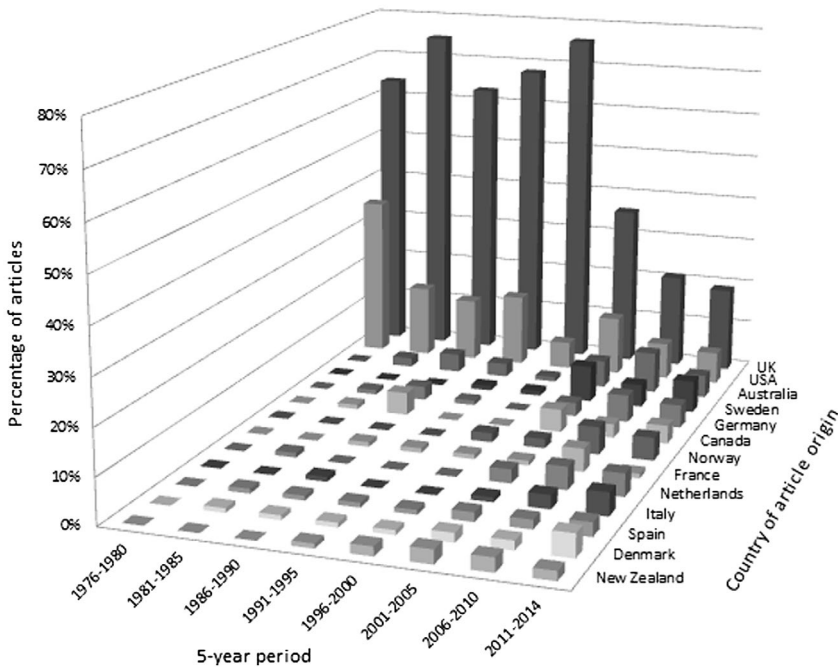


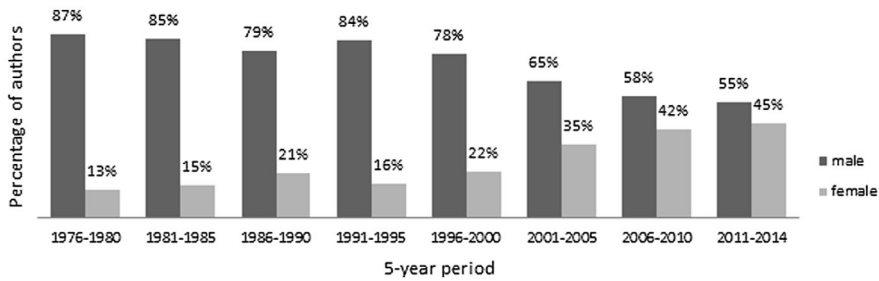
Figure 2. Distribution of countries of paper origin, defined as the country of affiliation of the first author at time of publication, in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 (n = 788).



**Figure 3.** Analysis of the distribution of countries of paper origin in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 by five-year period (included are only those countries whose total contribution was over 1%;  $n = 788$ ).

of origin, defined as the country of the affiliation of the first named author at the time of publication (see Figure 1). There is much variation within this range (see Figure 2). Overall, UK authors contribute 46% of all papers—by far the largest proportion and perhaps a legacy of the journal's origin. However, this proportion has been decreasing as the range of author origins has widened (see Figure 3). While authors between 1976 and 1980 came from the UK and USA only, authorship expanded after 2000, initially to other English-speaking countries, most notably Australia; and from 2006 onwards initially to North-Western, then also Southern and Eastern European countries. However, other parts of the world remain under-represented, and contributions from Asia (including countries with significant landscape research communities, such as China, Japan and Korea), South and Central America, and Africa remain scarce. This imbalance is similar within other journals in the landscape field and beyond (e.g., Bentsen, Lindholst, & Konijnendijk, 2010; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Paasi, 2005) and reflects factors such as English-language competency, the political economy of universities and different research cultures, understandings of landscape, research priorities—and of course the home base of the journal. However, *Landscape Research* contrasts with some academic landscape journals in terms of the relatively low number of papers currently originating in the US. While earlier issues featured papers from renowned US-American landscape researchers such as Thomas Herzog (1984), Clare Cooper Marcus (1982), Joan Nassauer (1980), Rodiek (1978; Rodiek & Thomas, 1980), Roger Ulrich (1979) and Ervin Zube (1975; 1976), *Landscape Research* publishes relatively few US-based landscape scholars today—although there are exceptions (e.g., Duempelmann, 2011; Mitchell, 2007; Spirn, 2005).

Author gender, defined as the gender of the first named author, averages one third female to two thirds male over the entire period. However, female authorship has increased continuously from a low of 13% in the first five years, to 44% in the most recent period (see Figure 4). This parallels trends in research and scholarship in general (Rigg, McCarragher, & Krmeneč, 2011; West, Jacquet, King, Correll, & Bergstrom, 2013), and in other landscape journals such as *Landscape Journal* (Powers & Walker, 2009), and suggests *Landscape Research* is reflecting broader trends and their socio-economic drivers.



**Figure 4.** Analysis of authorship gender in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 by five-year period ( $n = 767$ ; the gender of 21 authors could not be determined).

The disciplinary background of authors, defined as the affiliation at the time of publication, has always been fairly wide ranging. Some minor changes apart, the ratio between the disciplines has remained relatively stable and balanced over the period investigated. The top four contributing disciplines, averaged over the 40 years, are environmental design (20%), geography (19%), ecology and conservation (15%) and behavioural and cultural studies (14%) (see Figures 5 and 7(a)).

From its origins, *Landscape Research* has aimed to appeal to a wide academic and professional readership. To what extent does the journal's authorship mirror this promise? An examination of the institutional affiliation of the first named author at the time of publication highlights two features. First, a clear majority of all papers (79%) over the 40-year period have come from traditional research organisations such as universities. Second, contributions from universities and research institutes have increased steadily, from 73% of all contributions between 1976 and 1980, to 98% between 2011 and 2014. Authors affiliated with public bodies, councils and private consultancy firms, on the other hand, have progressively contributed ever fewer papers (declining from 25% in 1976-1980 to only 2% in 2011-2014). The role of contributions from independent scholars or artists has remained consistently low, ranging between 0 and 5%.

These figures and the trends they express are likely to reflect three related factors. First, the changing nature of the journal: in the earlier years short and practice-oriented contributions were welcome, and typically came from the grey zone between academia and the professions, frequently in the form of short research digests, or normative commentaries on practice. Second, the changing context and standards of academic journal publishing in general, and the development of research and scholarship in the landscape field more generally, and in landscape architecture in particular (Deming & Swaffield, 2011), have meant that while reflective and scholarly practitioners were able to meet the editorial standards in the early years, they may now lack skills or motivation to negotiate the peer review process currently in place. A third factor is the increasing pressure on all professionals to focus on the core elements of their job. The effect has been quite the opposite for academics compared with practitioners in local authorities or private consultancy firms. An increasing focus in universities on research (a 'publish or perish' culture) and the widening number of academics with competency in English as a research language have significantly enlarged the pool of motivated academic contributors. At the same time, it has become more difficult for non-academics to meet increasingly stringent research standards, or justify the time needed for preparing publications. This raises significant questions for the future direction of the journal in respect of its aims for inclusivity and publishing practice-based or practice-relevant research.

## 5. Wide thematic coverage?

A key aim of the journal has been to increase the breadth of scope within the field of landscape. To test this aim, the thematic content of research papers in *Landscape Research* was classified using Deming and Swaffield's (2011) synthesis of the core domains of landscape architecture knowledge, based on a

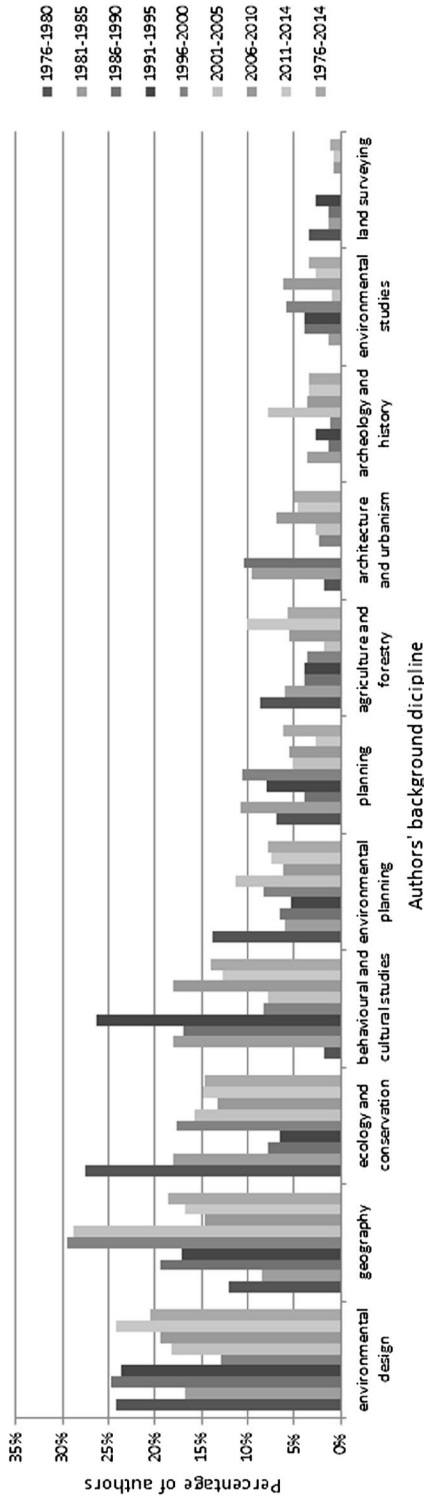


Figure 5. Distribution of the authors' background discipline, defined as the discipline of the affiliation of the first named author at time of publication, in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 by five-year periods ( $n = 787$ ).

The designations for the disciplines include the following: *environmental design*: landscape architecture, built environment, landscape design, land reclamation—*geography*: human, cultural, social, physical geography, geographical sciences—*ecology and conservation*: ecology, hydrology, botany, biology, conservation, earth sciences, biodiversity studies, terrestrial ecology, marine ecology, environmental science—*behavioural and cultural studies*: sociology, art history, psychology, anthropology, African studies, sport studies, linguistics, tourism, politics, philosophy, literature, environmental economics, art, visual art, graphic design, theatre, education—*environmental planning*: environmental planning, landscape planning, environmental management, regional development, landscape management, land use—*planning*: town planning, city planning, urban planning, spatial planning, country planning, rural planning, rural development, countryside management—*agriculture and forestry*: agricultural sciences, forestry, agriculture, horticulture, agricultural economics, food marketing—*architecture and urbanism*: architecture, urban design, building science, building technology—*archaeology and history*: history, environmental history, archaeology, cultural heritage, historical studies, garden history—*environmental studies*: (social) studies of man-nature relationship—*land surveying*: land surveying, GIS, etc.

range of sources, which was deemed to be a good basis for testing the breadth of the themes addressed in the journal. The classification has been adapted to the *Landscape Research* context because landscape architecture represents a very small part of journal content (see notes a–j in Table 4). Landscape planning and ecology (31%) and history and culture (22%) have formed the consistent core of papers submitted to the journal. There has been a clear decline in some of the practice-related subject areas that were popular in the 1980s (urban design, landscape design and implementation) and an increase in social science research (human and environment relationships). There was early interest in landscape assessment and perception research (classified within sustainability; perception) from the 1970s to the early 90s, and this topic seems to be undergoing a revival, forming 14% of the journal's papers in the most recent period (2011–2014). Design theory, methods of inquiry, and communication and visualisation have remained a constant, if small, proportion. Two of the domains analysed (design education and pedagogy, and landscape professional practice) have seldom featured.

Comparison of these findings with editorials and other retrospections and predictions (e.g., Brotherton, 1981, 1985; Burgess, 1993, 1996; Cosgrove, 1990; Howard, 1993; Roe, 2009; Thompson, 2004) highlights some interesting points. In 1996, Jacqueline Burgess noted that '[m]any of the trends evident by the end of the 1980s look set to continue for the foreseeable future', but she also identified new and emerging landscape research issues, namely sustainability, environmental economics and post-colonial critiques (Burgess, 1996, p. 6). She then discussed themes she 'would like to see develop over the next few years' (Burgess, 1996, p. 5), which included methodological and epistemological issues in landscape research and the 'The Rise of Social and Cultural Theories in Landscape Research' (Burgess, 1996, p. 9). In reflecting on Burgess' speculations, Thompson (2004, p. 5), in his first editorial, confirms continued interest in 'sustainability, particularly in the context of landscape ecology and landscape planning' as well as questions of meaning. He qualifies Burgess' prediction of environmental economics as a potential theme, but notes a trend towards small-scale ethnographic studies and studies using participatory approaches. In looking forward, Thompson asked Board members of the LRG and the editorial board what they believed to be the 'most important questions' for landscape research in the opening years of the twenty-first century. He grouped the answers under various headings, including questions of evaluation, heritage, character, representation and identity, plural values, the creation of valuable places and the internationalisation of landscape research.

While the thematic categories in our analysis of content do not allow Burgess' and Thompson's predictions to be tested formally, all of the themes and questions identified are evident in one or more papers published over the past decade, while none have emerged as dominant. This highlights two points. The first is that the collective wisdom of editorial advisors can be prescient in identifying trends and suggests an important continuing role. The second point is more speculative: that *Landscape Research* does not favour any one approach could be interpreted to mirror the conviction also held by scholars not involved in the journal that 'only a plurality of answers and approaches can begin to do justice to the iridescent and often opaque character of landscape' (Malpas, 2011, p. xii).

While the editorial process was not a focus of this investigation, the thematic analysis provides an opportunity to consider the influence of editors on journal content. It has been noted that editors of *Landscape Research* are appointed by the LRG Board, sometimes with conscious intent to influence journal content. This is based on the assumption that the academic profile of the editor matters in attracting contributions. In musing why art-based contributions peaked under his guidance, Peter Howard (a geographer who taught for a long time at art schools) reflects that while there would not have been a policy of publishing papers with this focus, 'the editor's circle of contacts and known or presumed bias probably affects the kind of submitted material' (1993, p. 55). However, Howard also argues that 'the most important reason that the last decade has seen so many art-based papers in this and other journals is its quantity, its quality and its importance'. Paul Selman, editor of the journal from 1994 to 2003, gave an editorial promise in his first editorial not to indulge in personal tastes 'at the expense of the wider interests of LRG membership and the Journal's international audience' (Selman & Mills, 1994, p. 56). While the analysis does show a peak in landscape planning and ecology papers from 1996 to 2000, this is largely attributable to the anomaly created by a voluminous special issue

on economic valuation, whose papers were classified here under 'sustainability and assessment'. In the following period (2000–2005), also largely under Selman's editorship, the proportions fall back to the average. Under the period corresponding most closely with Maggie Roe's editorship (2011–2014), there is an increase in papers addressing human and environment relationships and sustainability; perception, and fewer papers dealing with history and culture. Hence, there is some evidence that editors do, intentionally or not, influence the content of *Landscape Research*, though other factors such as the wider research trends in landscape studies seem to matter more.

## 6. Methodological diversity?

This section of the paper considers the methodological diversity of papers in *Landscape Research*, and asks how the process of knowledge formation has evolved over the 40 year life of the journal. The typology adopted is also drawn from Deming and Swaffield (2011) and categorises all papers analysed according to the strategies of inquiry they have employed. Deming and Swaffield (2011, p. 2) use the term strategy to mean the 'configuration of an overall system of inquiry relative to the current range of epistemological and theoretical perspectives in our field'. Their classification comprises nine categories of research strategy developed across two dimensions (see Table 5).

The first dimension in the framework recognises that scholarly inquiry may range from inductive (empirically led) to deductive (theoretically lead) modes of investigation; the second dimension recognises different presumptions about the relationship between researcher and subject, ranging from strategies which seek objectivity through distancing the researcher and subject, such as in experimentation, to those that use subjectivity as a fundamental part of the investigation—such as action research or research through design. Between these opposites lie strategies that are interpretive, in that they reflexively mediate between theory and observation, and acknowledge the researcher as an active but not primary agent (see Swaffield & Deming, 2011 for a summary).

Applying the typology of strategies has challenges and limitations. First, it is a didactic and heuristic working tool, and not prescriptive. This also implies that the categories are inevitably hard to define precisely—transitions from one category to the next are liminal zones, not hard boundaries. Second, in the early years of the journal, authors were seldom explicit about methods, and thus categorisation requires an interpretation of their research practice. Third, many recent papers have hybrid strategies and also typically involve multiple methods. The summary analysis records the strategy that is most dominant in the paper. Hence the value of categorisation of research strategies in the context of this review lies not in the precise allocation of papers to one or another type, but in the overall patterns of activity and trends over time that it might reveal.

The most notable feature of the analysis (see Table 6) is the dominance of interpretation as a mode of inquiry, accounting for over one third of published research (see Figure 7(c)). Furthermore, the use of interpretive strategies has increased significantly since the initial decade of *Landscape Research*, and may express two tendencies. First, interpretive research includes a range of methodological approaches relevant to the 'cultural turn' described above—Deming and Swaffield (2011) highlight ethnography, discourse analysis, iconography and historiography, all of which feature in *Landscape Research*. Second, interpretive strategies are methodologically flexible and can incorporate a range of types of data and methods, and are thus well suited to an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to landscape.

A second feature of the analysis of strategies is the progressive shift over time from predominantly descriptive inquiry to greater emphasis on modelling and correlation, as well as evaluation and diagnosis (see Figure 6). Description accounts for some 20% papers overall, but the proportion declines over time.

**Table 5.** Categorisation of research strategies according to Deming and Swaffield (2011).

	Inductive	Reflexive	Deductive
Objective	Description	Modelling and correlation	Experimentation
Constructive	Classification	Interpretation	Evaluation and diagnosis
Subjective	Action research	Design	Logical systems



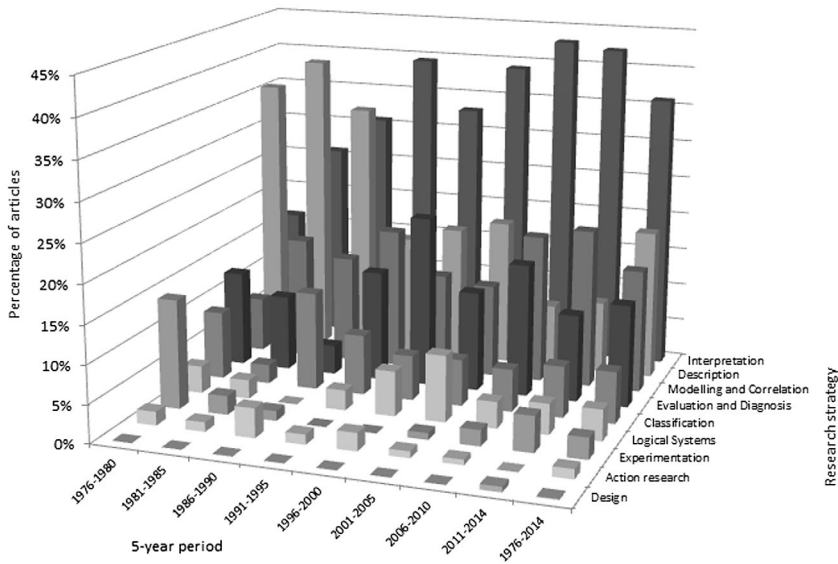


Figure 6. Analysis of research strategies in *Landscape Research* between 1976 and 2014 by five-year period.

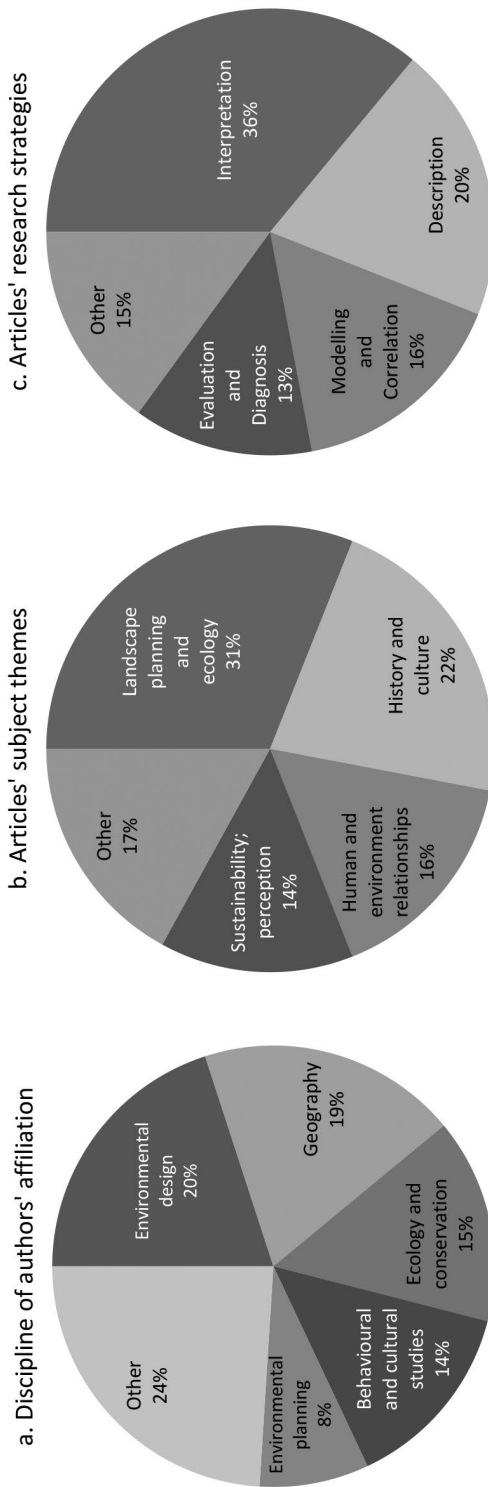
Modelling and correlation, and evaluation and diagnosis both increase, reflecting growing interest in the development and application of systematic methods of knowledge gathering and analysis for landscape planning and management, and explicit use of such data for landscape evaluation.

Equally notable is the almost complete absence of experimental or quasi experimental research, or of action research or design led inquiry (which includes artistic research) as a research strategy. The lack of interest in formal experimentation is understandable—landscape is a complex phenomenon generally unsuited to laboratory experiments. However, the lack of quasi experimental work is more surprising and raises the question of whether the landscape researchers who frame their investigations in this way see *Landscape Research* as a primarily 'qualitative' journal. The lack of action research or design-based research is also noteworthy. The small number of design based and artistic research papers recorded is in some part due to the exclusion of the editorial category of photo essays from the analysis. However, had they been included, a decline in artistic research would have been revealed. While earlier volumes included this type of essay, it is absent from later volumes. This decline seems to coincide with the move to a commercial publisher (pers. comm. from Peter Howard, 13 February 2015). However, action and design-based research do feature in other landscape journals, raising a further question about how *Landscape Research* is perceived by authors. The disciplinary orientation of *Landscape Research* is revisited in the Section 7. In any case, the evidence suggests that the aim for methodological diversity is substantially but not yet fully achieved.

## 7. Interdisciplinary scope?

To what extent is *Landscape Research* interdisciplinary in character? Contributions are diverse as regards the authors' background discipline, research themes and research strategies employed (see Figure 7). The journal is clearly not restricted to any particular disciplinary, methodological or theoretical orientation. However, the fact that many disciplines contribute to the journal, and that a multitude of themes is addressed, only guarantees multidisciplinary, not interdisciplinarity: *Landscape Research* could simply be a forum that publishes papers from many disciplines which, however, individually stay 'within the boundaries of those fields' (Choi & Pak, 2006, p. 359). Investigating whether individual papers pursue interdisciplinary research would have required a level of in-depth analysis of the content and methods of





**Figure 7.** Synopsis of the discipline of authors' affiliation, the subject themes, and the research strategies for the period between 1976 and 2014. Figure 7(a) shows the distribution of disciplines of authors' affiliation ( $n = 787$ ; one affiliation was not provided and could not be researched). The category 'other' includes planning (6%); agriculture and forestry (6%); architecture and urbanism (5%); archaeology and history (3%); environmental studies (3%); land surveying (1%). Figure 7(b) shows the distribution of subject themes ( $n = 788$ ). The category 'other' includes urban design (5%); design theory, methods of inquiry (4%); communication and visualisation (3%); design education and pedagogy (1%); landscape architecture profession (1%); landscape architecture profession (1%); design (0%). Figure 7(c) shows the distribution of research strategies employed ( $n = 784$ ). The category 'other' includes classification (7%); logical systems (4%); experimentation (3%); action research (1%); design (0%).

papers beyond our present scope. However, the practical difficulty we faced in assigning each paper to only one category of research strategy (see Section 6) suggests that the research in a significant number of individual papers is indeed interdisciplinary to some degree. Furthermore, from our experience as readers and editors of the journal, we believe it is justifiable to say that *Landscape Research* actively supports the blurring, conflation or even dissolution of disciplinary boundaries, with 'discipline' understood both as a social institution (comprising, for example, the relation between a teacher and his or her discipline, the question of eligible institutions, or publication culture) and as an epistemological or cognitive entity (in Popper's world 3, see Popper, 1978). One indicator of this blurring is that the disciplinary 'home' of the authors (whether the authors come from e.g., a school of geography or an institute of landscape architecture) often seems irrelevant to the content or research strategies of a paper.

But what kind of interdisciplinary research characterises the papers in *Landscape Research*? We ask this question to understand how the journal performs compared with other journals in the landscape field which, given the complex and multidimensional nature of landscape, seems to demand an interdisciplinary scope. While we could not undertake a systematic comparison, our review allows us to highlight three points: first, the dominance of interpretive approaches in *Landscape Research* distinguishes it from the more science-focused journals. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, for example, publishes 'original, empirical research' on issues in 'landscape science, with an emphasis on applied work that provides solutions for landscape design' (Landscape and Urban Planning, 2015). Similarly, *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* has, at least in its first eight volumes, attracted exclusively papers from the natural and social sciences, but not a single contribution from the humanities (Bentsen et al., 2010). Second, the breadth of themes, research strategies and contributing disciplines seems to distinguish *Landscape Research* from landscape architectural journals such as *Landscape Journal* and the *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, the journals of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) and the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS), respectively. These journals are published by organisations that represent educators in landscape architecture, and their content and editorial approach reflects this role. Third, *Landscape Research* differs from some geographical journals with an interest in landscape, such as *cultural geographies*, which publishes 'scholarly research on and theoretical interventions into the cultural dimensions of environment, landscape, space, and place' (cultural geographies, 2015), in its interest in 'landscape practice' and in its *primary* focus on landscape as an integrative perspective and phenomenon.

## 8. Conclusion

Starting with an aim to encourage scholarly exchange between a wide circle of people interested in landscape research and practice (with a focus on the practice of landscape management, planning and design in Britain), *Landscape Research* has evolved into an interdisciplinary, international journal with researchers as its primary community. This has been an incremental development, characterised by the wish to include new discourses on landscape without losing sight of the established understandings and practices. Yet in sum, the change has been dramatic in terms of academic quality and richness of the peer-reviewed papers (see Figure 1; Tables 3–6). In this conclusion, we summarise the profile of *Landscape Research* that emerged from our analysis and pose questions that arise and which may be important to the future of the journal.

First, we consider the institutional context of the journal and its readership. From modest beginnings as a research digest for both scholars and professionals, *Landscape Research* is now produced as an academic journal by a major commercial publisher. However, intellectual ownership and direction remain with the LRG, for whom the relationship between theory and practice is a continuing central concern, as is the expectation that papers be accessible and meaningful to a broadly based and international readership. Our analysis suggests the range of contributions (which we have used as an indicator of readership) has widened in some respects but narrowed in others. While the UK no longer dominates, and contributions now come from across Europe and beyond, the contribution from North America

has declined. What does this imply about the profile of *Landscape Research* among North American academics and what are the implications? Further, contributions from the global south are still in the minority. What can be done to stimulate or support contributions from outside the 'developed' world?

Equally notable is that contributing lead authors are now almost entirely academic researchers and this raises questions about the orientation of the journal in respect to practice-based professionals compared with academic professionals. Does the lack of practitioners as lead authors also imply a reduction in practice-based readership? Is this an inevitable trend or can the journal promote strategies to engage practitioners in different ways, such as co-authoring papers, or perhaps reinvigorating the 'digest' function of earlier eras?

Notwithstanding the pressures that have led to an increasing academic focus, *Landscape Research* has maintained its approach to landscape studies as a broadly defined field of research, characterised by multi- and increasingly interdisciplinary understandings. Its range of content has evolved but remains broad. This has been made possible by a large increase in the number of papers published. The short analyses of papers focused on roads and upon the Peak District reveal how there has been a significant increase in the general level of sophistication in research reporting over time, with much more explicit explanation of methodology and hence justification for the knowledge claims. However, the lack of cross references to previous *Landscape Research* papers suggests that there is little cumulative learning within the journal, on these topics at least. Are these two examples typical of the journal, or are they outliers? If they are typical, how might the role of *Landscape Research* as a focus of cumulative academic discourse on important topic areas be strengthened—without imposing requirements of journal self-referencing upon authors?

The analysis reveals that the thematic scope of the journal is broad, but centred on landscape planning and ecology, landscape history and culture, and, increasingly, the social dimensions of landscape. However, it also reveals a decline in papers on practice-focused themes. What are the implications of this in respect to the goals of LRG regarding the relationship between theory and practice? Or perhaps the thematic analysis categories used here distort the true picture, and practice is merely less visible as a discrete category, but present nonetheless within the research? Given the evidence concerning the dominance of academic authorship, and the implications for practice based readership, this deserves further exploration.

The third area of analysis, methodology, reveals that the profile of *Landscape Research* is characterised by growing emphasis upon interpretation, modelling and correlation, and diagnosis and evaluation as research strategies. At the same time, there is very little reporting of quasi experimentation, action research, or design led inquiry. Yet each of these latter strategies are well represented, it would appear, in other landscape-related research journals. Does this reflect fewer submissions to *Landscape Research*, or problems with the quality of submissions, or has *Landscape Research* developed a profile among prospective contributors that suggests these strategies are not welcome, notwithstanding the very open statement of editorial policy? Perhaps the lack of papers using design led inquiry also reflects the journal format? Again, given the importance of practice in the journal aims, these questions warrant further investigation.

Finally, the analysis suggested that the journal is indeed achieving its goal of becoming more interdisciplinary. The evidence is circumstantial rather than explicit, but the breadth and diversity of contributions and contributors, and the wide adoption of interpretive and hybrid research strategies, imply an openness to conversations across disciplines that move beyond multidisciplinarity. Indeed, it can be argued that *Landscape Research* offers three complementary interdisciplinary discourses—an empirical concern for understanding landscape as an everyday place in which people live, work and play; a broadly interpretive perspective upon landscape as a culturally and socially meaningful phenomenon; and a diagnostic and evaluative focus upon landscape action and intervention. These three discourses are all active and growing. They are not mutually exclusive—indeed they are strongly interrelated—but reflect different imperatives for knowledge formation.

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