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Review: Designing Greenways: Sustainable Landscapes for Nature and People

By Paul Cawood Hellmund and Daniel Smith

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Hellmund, Paul Cawood and Smith, Daniel. *Designing Greenways: Sustainable Landscapes for Nature and People*. 2nd edition. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2006. 288pp. ISBN: 1559633253. US\$29.95, paper. Recycled, acid-free paper.

Designing Greenways: Sustainable Landscapes for Nature and People performs the reciprocal relationship between ecological science and greenway design, and is primarily directed toward landscape scientists, designers, planners and managers. Building upon the authors' *Ecology of Greenways* (1993) it also contributes to the burgeoning literature on combining ecology with practices of sustainable systems management. The book's premise is that greenway design is contextual design, involving multiple objectives and stakeholders. For, regardless of the imperatives of a capitalist economy—or perhaps because of that—a need exists to weave a discourse on sustainability to inform pragmatic, environmentally sensitive, and socially related action. The use of design for bringing people and nature together implies questions of complexity and conflict; sensitivity of scale; and institutional segregation. Throughout the six chapters of this volume, the authors confronts these sorts of questions, not by offering a “single recipe for designing a greenway,” (p. 7) but rather through a cross-disciplinary approach based on key findings in the field. Overall, based on the principles of landscape ecology, the book addresses the needs of identifying and preserving a landscape's structure, even when the rest of it is radically modified.

The concept of greenways as “bands on the landscape,” i.e., “corridors of land and water, and networks of such corridors” (p. 3) identifies with qualities such as linearity and connectivity. Greenways promote sustainability and help restore “landscape integrity,” a notion that the authors invoke to refer to the attainment of ecological health and societal wellbeing. Through, first, a delineation of greenways' various ecological and social functions and, second, a description of their design methodology, *Designing Greenways* offers a holistic perspective toward green-space design. It is this interdisciplinary vantage point, which makes the volume appealing to practitioners of Science and Technology Studies (STS) that deal with matters of green infrastructure. From an STS perspective, *Designing Greenways* stands at the intersection of not only science and design, but also of natural and social systems; city and nature; theory and practice; the natural and the social sciences.

Chapter one reviews greenway history and function followed by a presentation of landscape ecology's basic tenets in chapter two. Chapters three and four focus on greenways' specific functions as wildlife and riparian corridors. Chapter five, on social ecology, is characteristic of the authors' approach arguing for the expansion of the “greenway” concept to include questions of environmental justice, equality, and community participation. Chapter six presents a refined—compared to the version of 1993—greenway-design methodology that includes five stages of rational planning. The book concludes with a short epilogue outlining the opportunities in building greenways for sustainable landscapes.

Designing Greenways is carefully organized so that each chapter may stand independently of the rest; nevertheless, the social scientist or STS practitioner will particularly enjoy reading chapters 2 and 5. Scholars and professionals will keep the book as a useful reference, appreciating its wide range of examples, figures and tables, while students can benefit from a substantial summary of the relevant literature. Given the multiplicity of the issues at stake, even a book of 288 pages cannot embrace everything in detail. If, however, greater inclusiveness were required, a discussion of sustainable funding strategies would be appreciated. Questions such as how local and public support around greenways gets built and maintained, or how a greenway idea can be “sold” to local officials would have been interesting, had they been pursued more explicitly in the last chapter.

In *Designing Greenways* sustainability becomes a process rather than a goal, and that I take as a message to live by. Switching gears from ecological integrity in a biological sense, to a broader goal of landscape integrity, requires considering how greenways can benefit society. Nevertheless, constructing

landscape integrity as the aim and sustainability as the process may be a well-known philosophical move, to only postpone *ad infinitum* the conundrums associated with *defining* either of them.

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