

# SPECIAL SECTION

## Introduction

### *Unruly Landscapes: Mobility, Transience, and Transformation*

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In June 2020, the Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe) at the University of Lancaster (UK) and the Centre for Advanced Studies in Mobility & Humanities (MoHu) at the University of Padua (Italy) co-hosted an international conference on the theme of “Unruly Landscapes.” As a result of the pandemic, the two-day event had to be moved online, but participants nevertheless enjoyed two days of inspiring discussion as the speakers engaged with the intersection of landscape and mobility from a variety of disciplines and approaches.<sup>1</sup>

It was striking that this was a theme that attracted scholars from diverse scholarly and artistic communities, and we have attempted to reproduce the freshness of these dynamic, cross-disciplinary perspectives in the way we have grouped the articles here. Indeed, in order to maximize the diversity of the contributions, we sought approval from the *Transfers* editors to publish eleven shorter articles of five thousand words each across two special sections. We trust that readers of the journal will enjoy our purposefully “unruly” juxtaposition of disciplines and approaches, including the different ways that our contributors have understood and conceptualized the mobile landscape. However, both in our Introduction to Unruly Landscapes No. 1 and Unruly Landscapes No. 2, we have sought to make sense of what is going on in each article and to indicate how it contributes to the recent debates that most interest readers of this journal. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Tim Ingold for his keynote lecture at the conference which spoke about his recent work on landscape as “palimpsest”<sup>2</sup>—as well as artist Jen Southern (Lancaster University) for allowing us to use her formulation of the “unruly” for our event.<sup>3</sup>

## Special Section 2: Unruly Landscapes No. 2

In the Introduction to 12.1 we reflected on how recent theoretical trends in human geography have placed movement and mobility at the heart of how



landscape is now defined and understood. This is in marked contrast to historical models with their origins in Romantic aesthetics which—as Tim Cresswell has observed—characterize landscape as “a portion of the earth’s surface that can be seen from one spot” and also as “an intensely visual idea” that the viewer remains “outside of.”<sup>4</sup> By contrast, a wide spectrum of theoretical approaches<sup>5</sup> have now been enlisted to show that not only is landscape processual (i.e., in a constant state of flux and becoming) but also that human subjects can experience it “from the inside” and through practical engagement<sup>6</sup> in a multi-sensory way. A consequence of this, however, is that landscape has become an increasingly mobile and slippery concept to work with, not least because so many of the qualities and practices that have been redefined are the same as those geographers employ to understand “place.”<sup>7</sup>

As noted in the Introduction to 12.1, the articles gathered here certainly engage with the concept of landscape in a contemporary, expansive way—with a particular focus on embodied, practised and multi-sensory engagements with the environment in question. Landscape is rarely construed as the “object” of the gaze of an “external” viewer, although this way of seeing is sometimes implicitly critiqued, as in Mary Gearey’s article (following), which contrasts the “immersive,” recreational ways in which people now engage with wetland landscapes with their historical textual and discursive representation as a “delinquent space” best viewed from a distance. Indeed, immersive landscape experiences of various kinds have emerged as one of the defining features of the double special section as a whole; similarly, the means by which non-human phenomena (including transport infrastructures—e.g., roads, railways, tramways) are not merely situated *in* the landscape but are an integral *part of it*. Hence, the popularity of terms such as “roadscape” (Moser, 12.1) and “tramscape” (Finch, 12.1).

However, while it may be relatively easy to make the case for the role of movement and mobility in the production and experience of landscape, it is rather more difficult to evaluate what an informed knowledge of landscape offers mobilities scholarship. Tauri Tuvikene, in his article (following) on an unfinished tram project in Estonia, provides one example by demonstrating how the concept of “absent presence”<sup>8</sup>—popular among cultural geographers—helps identify some of the more elusive ways in which communities are invested in transport systems and their infrastructures. Simply because such a feature disappears from a landscape—either suddenly or over time—it doesn’t mean that it is forgotten or ceases to play an orientating role in people’s everyday lives.<sup>9</sup> This recognition of the complex ways in which transport infrastructures figure in the community and in/as the landscape shifts attention away from their mere utility. Similarly, for Lorenzo Bagnoli (following), the cultural significance of a transport system (in this case, the railway) is to be found in the wider mobility environment: in this case, the place names of stations. This “toponymical landscape” reveals a complex politics behind who

“owns” the place-identity of the locations through which the trains and their travelers pass.

Another way in which a “landscape approach” (Tuvikene, this issue) to mobility may prove instructive is by reminding us of the different elements (air, water, earth) which support mobility systems and in which mobile events occur. Although the mobilities studies field now includes many publications on aviation and shipping as well as earth-bound mobilities, cultural geographers’ appreciation of the special qualities associated with the landscapes supported by these different elements further enriches our understanding of what is distinctive about them. Indeed, in his recent book, *Landscape, Materiality and Heritage* (2022),<sup>10</sup> Tim Edensor reminds us that “an exclusive focus on the surface of the land” has severely limited landscape studies in the past and invokes Tim Ingold’s concept of the land as a “zone of admixture and mingling” in order to remind us that “water and air penetrate the earth.” In issue 12.1, Carolyn Deby’s article (itself based upon an artwork), “Still/We Noticed: Lifeworlds in Flow,” immerses the reader/viewer in the aerial properties of the landscape by focusing our attention on birds and birdsong, while Nick Ferguson’s contribution to this volume achieves something similar, though with a disturbing twist. Once again, the reader is taken “into the air,” but this time via the wheel bay of a jet aircraft. As well as a space which has been known to transport vegetative matter from one continent to another, the wheel bay has also been used as a means of passage by migrants desperate to escape persecution—often with fatal consequences. By drawing out the sensory aspects of this extraordinary means of flight, Ferguson takes us deep into the extremity, and horror, of the experience. Through their art practice and associated writing techniques (informed, conceptually, by non-representational theory), both Deby and Ferguson help us understand airborne mobilities in innovative ways. Mary Gearey’s article (also this issue), meanwhile, uses the watery landscape of the English wetlands to explore a wide range of mobilities—human and non-human—that are unique to an environment that is a liminal space between sea and land.

Finally, as many readers of this journal will be aware, geographical research on the role of temporality in the production and experience of landscapes (in particular through attention to processes of repetition, rhythm, and routine)<sup>11</sup> has long enriched the way in which mobilities scholars think about mobile practices themselves. Tim Edensor’s work has been especially influential in this regard: his encounters with landscape and place always seek to capture the way in which the daily rhythms of the human and non-human worlds are entangled as well as the way in which they are haunted by the mobilities of the past.<sup>12</sup> A similar sensitivity to the way in which our everyday mobilities layer the rhythms of the past onto those of the present is to be found in Ira Hansen’s article on the novels of Paul Auster (this issue); another example, then, of how theories and analytical methods that originated in geographical research fo-

cused on landscape and place have fed into an enriched understanding of mobility practices. Therefore, while—at first pass—it would seem easier to argue for how new attention to movement and mobility (across a broad spectrum of theories) transformed landscape research, the debt is most certainly reciprocal. Thinking about mobility practices in a landscape or, indeed, *as* a landscape not only extends their cultural and affective significance but also helps us to better understand the spatial and temporal mechanisms by which we move or are moved.

## Notes

1. The book of abstracts and the video recordings of the colloquium are available at: <https://www.mobilityandhumanities.it/unruly-landscapes/>.
2. Ingold discusses the concept of the palimpsest in his recent essay collection, *Correspondences* (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), 85–93.
3. See her research project “Unruly Pitch” (2015): <https://www.research.lancs.ac.uk/research/projects/unrulypitch>.
4. Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (2nd edition) (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 17.
5. Phenomenology: e.g., Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, [1962] 2000); David Seamon, *Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest and Encounter* (London: Routledge, [1979] 2016); Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, [1987] 2000). Cultural/practice-centered approaches: e.g., David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion, 1998). Assemblage theory: Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory: (Speculative Realism)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). Actor Network Theory: e.g., Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Rhythmanalysis: Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004).
6. For example, Tim Ingold’s concept of the “taskscape.” See Tim Ingold, “The Temporality of Landscape,” in *The Perception of the Landscape* (London: Routledge, [1993] 2000).
7. For a useful discussion of the distinction (or not) between place and landscape, see this roundtable discussion: Peter Merriman, George Revill, Tim Cresswell, Hayden Lorimer, David Matless, Gillian Rose and John Wylie, “Landscape, Mobility, Practice,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 9, no. 2 (2008): 191–212.
8. “Absence Presence”: see Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997); Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Aesthetics, Materiality and Memory* (Oxford: Berg, 2005); Avril Maddrell, “Living with the Deceased: Absence, Presence and Absence-Presence,” *cultural geographies* 20, no. 4 (2013): 501–522.
9. For a similar discussion of road infrastructure, see Lynne Pearce, “Driving North / Driving South: Britain’s Changing Roadscape, 2000–2020,” *Mobilities* (published electronically January 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2022.2156806>.

10. Tim Edensor, *Landscape, Materiality and Heritage: An Object Biography* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).
11. Chapters by David Bissell and Tim Edensor in *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* provide useful overviews of work on repetition, rhythm, and routine. See David Bissell, "Habits," in *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*, ed. Peter Adey, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman and Mimi Sheller (London: Routledge, 2014), 483–492; Tim Edensor, "Rhythm and Arrhythmia," in Adey et al., *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*, 163–171.
12. See Tim Edensor, "Mundane Hauntings: Commuting through the Phantasmagoric Working-Class Spaces of Manchester, England," *cultural geographies* 15, no. 3 (2008): 313–333.