

DIRKMICHAEL HENNRICH PAULOREYES ARTURROZESTRATEN  
editors

# THINKINGLANDSCAPE



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editors



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# ON THE TRANSVERSALITY OF LANDSCAPE THINKING TODAY

## AN INTRODUCTION

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Since the onset of the new millennium, landscape, as a concept and theme, is increasingly present in the most diverse fields of knowledge. As such, it is not just an issue of a lyrical, pictorial, geographical or architectural use of the concept, but a growth of considerations, that in their whole may be understood as a paradigmatic shift and an ineluctable reflection on landscape.

This growing attention to the concept of landscape occurs in parallel with the emergence of a concept for a new planetary era, the so-called Anthropocene, which describes the tremendous influence of mankind in the transformation of the Earth. Both concepts are simultaneously metaphors for a fundamentally new relationship with the Earth and for a progressive dissolution of the differentiation between Nature and Culture, which has occurred since the beginning of the modern age and that is closely related to the birth of modern technique and the development of capitalism. The ongoing disclosure of nature, conceived as mere matter, and the conquest

of the whole planet by a single life-form and thus the total anthropization of the earth, are fundamental characteristics of the modern age.

In this sense, the concept of landscape, which in western history was firstly understood through landscape painting, being for centuries claimed by it, receives a more encompassing meaning in the march of industrialization and formation of capitalism as dominant ideology. With the growing notion of the destruction of natural appearances and vital spaces of other life-forms by means of the industrial and technical progress, the care for the landscape, understood as a care for nature, becomes the centre of emerging nature conservation and environmental protection movements. This means that the concept of landscape as a metaphor of a modern relationship with the world, of a modern image of the world, is currently well received in philosophy and is increasingly seen throughout the 20th century as a significant philosophical concept, highlighted in a specific area of practical philosophy, the so-called Philosophy of Landscape.

Thinking Landscape in the frame of Philosophy of Landscape understands landscape not only as a modern representation of the intersection between Nature and Culture, but in a much wider and less abstract manner: the intersection of vertical and horizontal needs and demands, as the indiscernible interaction between transcendence and immanence, in which neither immanence means only the earthly, physical or material, nor transcendental stands solely for the atmospheric, metaphysical and immaterial. Landscape is not simply the environment because it has always surpassed any environment and because in it one can find the most diverse environments. Neither it is just a political or ethnical territory, but the versatile surface of the Earth, the sensual space of all forms of life, the multiple face of nature, subject to its own changes and dispositions, and a shelter for the multiplicity of organic and inorganic phenomena, which all have the right to be preserved.

Here too comes the question of the future of the city and the life of the community of all living beings as a whole, which has always been a question of the place and value of the politics. The city is the place of the formation of political practice and the place of the education of free individuals into political actors. From the Greek city-state, the polis, to the bourgeois city of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, to the large cities and megalopolises of modernity and late modernity; however, the freedom to participate politically in the process of political decision-making remains the freedom of the few. If in the Greek city-state only a certain political elite was entitled to co-determination through an active exclusion of the masses, in late modernity, even in democracies dominated by capital and neoliberalism, the exclusion of the masses takes place through the structural lack of access to the basic requirements of a good life, in the sense of the Greek *eudaimonía*.

Only the participation of all within the political process of the community, oriented towards comprehensive recognition, self-determination and psychological and physical prosperity, would be at the same time the prerequisite of a future city. The way to this participation is thus a political way, but this must not be understood as a mere right or duty to freedom, which has its grounding in abstract jurisdictions, but this must happen through an opening, an education towards freedom, and through an initiation into freedom.

This opening to freedom and the understanding of how to deal with freedom is first and foremost a practice that starts from the bodily being-in-the-world, a politics of the sensitive that trains the individual to be a sentient and sensitive member of the community. It is primarily directed towards the recognition of all natural phenomena, the natural body, which is every human being itself, as well towards all the other bodily situated living beings. Only a comprehensive development of all sensory

perceptions in exchange with the possibilities and limits of the meaning of other living beings or systems of life would guarantee the basis for general participation in the political discourse.

Current urban and landscape planning, and architecture in general, can enable and prepare this process through the transformation of political spaces by orienting their projects towards the principle of the sensitive and the formation of sensitivity, while involving as many political actors as possible in the design and maintenance of these spaces. Apart from a comprehensive inclusion of the natural in the urban space, it will be necessary to let the natural (water, air, earth, plants, animals) interact with the bodily naturalness of the human in a creative, poetic way.

Another fundamental condition of the political participation of all in the creation and maintenance of the polis would be the ever-expanding creation of community spaces and a related abolition of disproportionate ownership. The distinction between private and public space must be subjected to a veritable reversal (revolution), with public space once again gaining primacy over private space. This is by no means a matter of abolishing the private, but of turning away from the private and from private property as the ultimate goal of capitalist, neoliberal systems. Enabling responsible, communal design and maintenance of public spaces as a site of political practice would be one of the first tasks of architecture.

To think architecture, at the time of the total transformation of the Earth through human interventions, recommends a reinterpretation of its purpose and meaning. Architecture, understood as the art of inaugurating the dwelling, has always been the reflection of the human relationship with its environment and the mirror of the relationship of the entire species with itself. Architecture, as a technique of founding a dwelling space, is originally motivated by the search for protection against an overwhelming nature, a direct and material response against the imposition of the sphere of necessity that weighs upon human existence.

Architecture is consolidated along the development of technical consciousness and the increasing possibility of deliberately shaping mundane matter with the result of the total appropriation and colonisation of the most diverse spaces and earthly landscapes. Thus it would be necessary to think the anarchic future of architecture, which means the opening of an unfounded dwelling and the demand and possibility of a non-possessive relationship to build the contingency of human life, to establish practical ethics, a transitive dwelling as a renewed dwelling with the Earth.

This an-architectural thought would contemplate the baselessness of dwelling, considering the nomadic being in the world before the beginning of sedentarism, but not to counterpose the nomadic to the sedentary, which would be hypocritical in times of increasing urbanisation of humanity and for the multitude of human beings who live in precarious situations without the possibility of living properly. It makes no sense to worship the nomadic mobility of the modern cosmopolitan urban individual, tied to a linear and punctual history and based on monocratic and monotheistic capitalism. On the contrary, the nomadic is here understood as the common, the cyclical, not monotheistic, but pantheistic or animistic, an abode not of individualistic individuals, but of tribes (packs, shoals, groups, clusters etc.) or societies in motion and flowing, open to break all manners of foundations and fundamentalisms.

Individualism, therefore, would not be a self-affirmation as such, but a continuous opening towards the other, because it is not a question of establishing universal values only for humans (anthropocentrism), but of finding justice in all species in the anarchic nature and relationship with the world.

Anarchitecture would be first of all a dissolution of property, which itself exceeds the existence of the individual and falls within the scope of the exercise of power. This means that representative architec-



ture and emblems of power must be negated because they completely reflect modern subjectivity described as an appropriative subjectivity. The first step out of modern subjectivity is the abolition of accumulated property and its dissolution through the restitution of the appropriations that have taken place in the process of modernity. This means the decolonization of property and, consequently, its just redistribution.

This architecture, however, is thus no longer comparable to the dominant architecture, but is almost its inversion, or at least its re-evaluation: the public rather than the private; the communal rather than the individual; the practical rather than the theoretical; the corporeal rather than the spiritual; the sensitive rather than the rational; the horizontal rather than the vertical; distribution rather than accumulation; and so on.

Regarding the previous reflections, thinking landscape in a wide and transdisciplinary way is more than necessary to really initiate a renewed relationship with Earth. Earth is neither house nor environment, but rather the reunion of countless landscapes and forms of life that do not remain in their environments but in an inter-relationship with each other. The world, known as Earth, means the reunion and widest opening of countless landscapes and forms of life that coexist with one another, neither dominated by a single landscape nor by a specific life form. At the same time, landscapes are also not simply given, as if the totality of all landscapes would offer a clear image of the Earth. Landscapes are not simply given because they are modified in the passing of time and the passage of the most varied life forms. They are visualizations of the outside and openings to the inside; they must be trod upon and apprehended always anew.

Thinking Landscape as a fundamental part of practical philosophy, and designated as Philosophy of Landscape has been consolidated at the Centre of Philosophy of the University of Lisbon over the past decade

and has been considered with numerous publications, projects and academic events. One of the most recent events was the 1st International Conference of Philosophy of Landscape, held at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Lisbon from November 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 2019.

From this event resulted the texts that are presented here, addressing the landscape in its relationship with the Anthropocene, blurring the boundaries between nature and culture, in order to think about our relationship with the world. In the wake of what Jean-Marc Besse called five doors or entry possibilities to the concept of Landscape, we chose to organize the thoughts that follow here in three reading keys ordered by three signs: seeing, feeling and imagining. From 'Perception and Engagement' to 'Sensitivity and Affection' and to 'Representation and Designing' the present volume gives an overview of this transdisciplinary reflection on landscape, focusing on the necessity to establish a constructive dialogue between theory and practice, between thought and action, at a time when man's relationship with the earth seems completely detached from the ethical content of dwelling.

In the section "Perception and Engagement", we find texts that take perception much more than a simple act of representation in which the body of the observer stands out from what is in front of him/her as landscape, and position it as a relation of engagement between subject and object, to the point that this distinction no longer makes sense. Perception thought of as engagement brings into the field of philosophy of landscape the notion of landscape experience.

In the set of texts organized under the title "Sensibility and Affect", we offer texts that present the landscape in its face of existential experience, establishing an ethical and committed relation within the interface human and nature. We are in the sphere of the experience "in situ" where the body allows itself to be affected by the landscape in its different manifestations and scales - from amplitude to residual spaces.

In the last section, entitled "Representation and Project", we present texts that think the landscape in the sense of being altered by the human mind and hand through the action of representation and, more specifically, by the project. In the different readings of the project on the landscape, we do not lose sight of the critical position regarding the human consequences in relation to nature, with the intention of building new landscape imaginaries in which the aesthetic field is merged with the ethical field.