

# FOREWORD

Interestingly, in terms of both the concept and what it refers to, the word ‘landscape’ is an interpretation in itself: it relates to a particular view of our natural environment. Long before the species *homo* evolved, planet Earth was already in existence. In the Earth’s evolution, humans are a late arrival, first appearing only some 2.5 million years ago, and the sub-species *homo sapiens* a mere 70,000 years ago. Nevertheless, this species has had a tremendous influence on the Earth’s appearance. With the arrival of the species *homo*, ‘landscapes’ were born. The big-brained species, humankind, quickly developed the skills needed to work together and control many aspects of its living conditions in hunting and in gathering supplies for survival, and in the course of so doing changing the environment.

Today’s world is the result of this presence; there are no ‘landscapes’ beyond *homo sapiens*. Nature may exist in a strongly altered form, ranging from the deepest oceans, vastest deserts, and most luscious rainforests, to the smallest of city gardens measuring only a single paving stone. However, it is the human species that impacted and/or created these different natural phenomena, and it is not the individual animal or plant but man himself who is conscious of them. These species do not have the kind of long-term memory humans have, nor the human ability to reflect on their actions. Whereas ‘landscape’ initially referred to natural landscapes, that is, to all the visible features of

an area of land (and often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal), the term increasingly indicates the entire living environment of humans: physical, visual, and mental. But there is more to it. In recent thinking, the term ‘the Anthropocene’ was coined to define Earth’s most recent geological time period as being profoundly influenced by humans to such an extent that all kinds of Earth system processes, and the biosphere, have changed irreversibly, although there is some agreement that not all humans living on Earth can be held equally accountable. The industrialized countries are by far the biggest driving forces responsible for these changes. Whereas the suffix ‘-cene’ indicates an epoch in geological times, ‘-scape’ is a qualifier hinting at the modelling of (‘landscaping’) or interfering in the environment on the one hand, and a particular view (landscape, seascape, cityscape), that is, something that is perceived as such, on the other. This perception refers to the outside world as well as mental images: ‘intellectual landscape’, ‘landscape of our mind’, ‘landscape of contributions’, indicating the vast and multifaceted scope of something. Obviously, the term landscape has rich connotations, but the term has also lost its innocence. We live in a multitude of ‘scapes’ and they come in many guises, not all of them pretty, as the collection of articles in Issues #6 and #7 of this journal show. Together, these articles reflect the human condition with respect to our changed, industrialized, and computerized world. Because of these profound changes, the landscape has become the thermometer of the human condition. When the natural landscape changes, human beings change. The human species is slowly becoming aware of the fact that we are not standing outside, but are inherently part of our — natural — environment.

Perhaps because we are so intrinsically connected to the landscape, people never tire of contemplating what ‘landscape’ means to us, both mentally and physically, and how precisely we are connected. Issues such as these, regarding what landscape means to people in whatever guise or medium it comes, are especially debated within the Humanities and in contemporary visual art practices. Landscapes are designed, perceived, experienced, worshipped, analysed,

represented in texts and visual and material culture, digitized, and seen as metaphors (e.g. 'landscape of justice'). The term has given birth to an endless range of 'scapes', with a clear reference to Arjun Appadurai's quintet of fluid, nondelineated 'scapes' transgressing apparent realities in front of us. Some examples would be ethno-, media-, techno-, finance-, and ideoscape, to which I would like to add a sixth one, the 'artscape', to address the mass of art around the world in past and present. Landscapes can also be artscares.

The 2017 LUCAS Graduate Conference was motivated by the topicality of the subject, and this is the second issue of the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* to be devoted to it. From 25 to 27 January 2017 Leiden University was the meeting place for an international host of speakers, artists, and participants attending nineteen panels with topics ranging from landscape and law, digitization and pixilation of landscapes, landscape and (national) identity, colonial landscapes, gardens and landscape design, and landscape poetics to a wealth of artists' presentations and performances. Similarly, the conference's keynote speakers reflected the scope of the topics: David E. Nye (University of Southern Denmark) in discussing how American cityscapes changed under the influence of electric lighting in the period from 1880 to 1910, and Elizabeth Losh (William & Mary, Williamstown, VA, USA) on digital landscapes. Issue #7 of this journal presents a second selection from this inspiring plethora.

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