

## Introduction

The fourteenth issue of *Flusser Studies* consists of three different sections addressing notions of space and landscape within Vilém Flusser's work as well as within art history, landscape theory, the history of Judaism and translation theory. One of the main intentions of this issue is to open *Flusser Studies* to recent research within landscape theory – in this case, contemporary German-speaking landscape theory – combining it with texts on and by Vilém Flusser regarding the significance of space and landscape for a philosophy of communication. A series of images from the project *Orogenesis* by the Catalan Photographer Joan Fontcuberta – whose work and relationship with Flusser has already been commented on in *Flusser Studies 13* – as well as a few pictures of the landscape Flusser inhabited during the last ten years of his existence, round off the issue.

The issue starts out with three unpublished essays by Vilém Flusser, each of which deals with the symbolic relevance of landscape and the relationship of nature and culture within a post-modern and post-historical setting from a different point of view: *Paraiso*, *Paradise*, *Von den Gärten*, *On Gardens*, and *Outono*, *Autumn*.

In the first contribution, “Paradise and Hell”. Vilém Flusser's fabulation into the abysses of the ocean and the human mind,” Robert Krause discusses Flusser's philosophical fiction *Vampyrothenthis Infernalis*. The paper reconstructs Flusser's diabolical trip into the abyss and his intent to overcome anthropocentrism, highlighting the intrinsic relationships between completely different spaces and species.

Sertório de Amorim e Silva Neto's “Horizons of a philosophy of exile: Horkheimer's and Flusser's America” is dedicated to a comparative study of Flusser's and Horkheimer's philosophy of exile. Apart from a series of biographical similarities these two philosophies radically diverge on most issues. In the USA Horkheimer tried to recover his intellectual freedom, but the American reality only confirmed the European parameters he had left behind. Flusser, on the other hand, discovered a completely new world on Brazilian territory: different not only from a geographic but also from a human and intellectual point of view.

Benjamin Steininger's essay “Surface sciences down to earth: On the technological condition of modern landscape” explores one of the industrial foundations of modern landscape: the chemical industry and its principle of catalysis. From the point of view of catalysis three distinct as-

pects can be identified: a planetary, an everyday perspective on the dynamics of industrial agriculture as well as a micro perspective on chemical agents. Although these topics seem far away from Flusser's work, they maintain a series of links to his conception of the relationship of nature and culture.

Dirk-Michael Hennrich's "Hyperbolic Tropical Landscapes. Views of Brazil from Simão de Vasconcelos to Vilém Flusser" focuses on a series of different views of Brazil and tropical landscape. As Hennrich points out, the experience of the tropics seems to call for extreme positions. The descriptions of Brazilian cities and landscapes often make use of hyperbolic images. Vilém Flusser is no exception.

Hansjörg Küster's "Man or Landscape – What came first? Answers from Vilém Flusser's *Vogelflüge*" compares modern landscape theory with the essays in *Natural:mente* that Flusser wrote over the course of the 1970s, after his departure from Brazil.

Finally, in "Mapping in Flusser, Deleuze and Digital Technology," Judith Kahl explores possible connections between the concept of mapping in Deleuze and Guattari's and Vilém Flusser's work. The insistence on a primacy of holistic mapping over subjective *tracing* in Deleuze's and Guattari's account presents the danger of cutting off the subject from its physical environment. Flusser ponders some consequences of this process in his "My Atlas". Building on these results, Judith Kahl points to some of the difficulties individuals are facing when engaging with new digital technology, in particular Google Maps.

The first section of the issue also contains Judith Kahn's English translation of the first, still unpublished, German version of Vilém Flusser's "Mein Atlas", as well as three more versions of this text: the German original of the first version, a French variant and a Portuguese variant of the second version. Flusser most probably first wrote a German and French version of the text. These two texts show slight differences: the German one is about one page longer than the French. He then wrote a newer shorter version in two different languages, German and Portuguese. The shorter German version has been published twice so far: in the collection of essays *Dinge und Undinge. Phänomenologische Skizzen*, published by Hanser in 1993, pages 113 to 117, and in the catalogue *Atlas Mapping. Künstler als Kartographen, Kartographie als Kultur*<sup>1</sup> published in 1997 in Vienna.

The astonishing landscape images of Joan Fontcuberta's *Orogenesis* project work as a bridge between the texts dedicated to Vilém Flusser's view of landscape and space and the more general

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ok-centrum.at/?q=en/node/41>. This text can be found on the recently created internet site *Flusser studios*, dedicated to Vilém Flusser <http://www.flusserestudios.cl/FLUSSER-WEB/flusser%20archiv/magazin/deutsch/atlas%20mapping.pdf>.

section dealing with different aspects of landscape theory. *Orogenesis* is a geographic term that relates to the process of mountain formation. In this series Fontcuberta has co-opted a piece of computer software to build convincing photo-realistic interpretations out of cartographic data. The artist, however, did not feed the computer with standard maps, but with reproductions of masterpieces from the history of landscape photography in 19th and 20th centuries. The results challenge the status of the photographic document as well as that of landscape by recreating wild, baroque virtual worlds alluding to the metaphoric dialogue between illusion, nature, culture, and technology. The artist has permitted the publication of four of these pictures together with the images with which they are entering into dialogue.

The first contribution of the second section, Miriam Volmert's "From the 'chaos of paint' to the 'blot': Concepts of *inventio* and memory in the theories of Alexander Cozens and Samuel van Hoogstraten," discusses aspects of artistic *inventio* in landscape painting in the 17th and 18th centuries with a special interest in the changing concept of memory and its growing influence on new theories of art. The main focus is on two discourses on artistic invention, an artistic anecdote by the Dutch painter and theorist Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–1678) and the blotting system from the English landscape-painter Alexander Cozens (1717–1786).

In "History of Landscape – Landscape Theory – Landscape Change: Conceptions and Case Studies" Norbert Fischer focuses on the use of the concept of landscape within various scientific disciplines. The spectrum ranges from the Modern classic concept of landscape to the postmodern approaches to particularized landscapes. The theoretical discourse is currently dominated by the disagreement between the classical concept of landscape on the one hand and the new, particularized concept of landscape on the other. Fischer debates this new perspective on landscape in connection with the example of the coastal landscape of the Baltic and North Seas, dealing specifically with the Graswarder Peninsula near Heiligenhafen in Germany and the changing of sea embankments.

In "Spaces of Emotion. A topical issue rooted in the age of Enlightenment" Stefanie Krebs focuses on the concept of landscape gardening and its relation to the notion of spaces of emotion. Starting out with a description of the "Hinübersche Garten" near Hanover, the essay explores a specific mode of landscape-perception: during a garden walk the visitor should experience a sequence of different emotions evoked by landscape design. Similar strategies can be found in contemporary site specific art, transforming the spectator into an emotionally involved participant.

Nicolas Berg's "Regional Studies and Economic Geography: Academic Antisemitism in the Work of Siegfried Passarge in the 1920s and 1930s" presents the work on regional geography by

the Hamburg-based academic Siegfried Passarge (1867–1958), a very clear example of a volkish-national world-centered view on culturally homogenous *Bodenständigkeit*, a mentality that became hegemonic in Germany during the 1930s and early 1940s, and against whose ideological tenets, traditions, and consequences Vilém Flusser engaged in a longstanding struggle.

Rainer Guldin’s article “Translating Space: On Rivers, Seas, Archipelagos and Straits” explores possible convergences between translation and geography focusing on a series of spatial metaphors that try to break free from the simple idea of separation and opposition. Languages are viewed not as radically different and self-contained cultural continents existing on separate shores or riverbanks but as constantly moving and intermingling currents and interlinked heterogeneous archipelagos. Instead of the metaphor of the river that has to be crossed in the course of translation the paper focuses, above all, on the metaphor of the strait, which stresses the very difficulties of translation, highlighting the absence of any easy binary division.

Thomas Zeller’s “Staging the Driving Experience: Parkways in Germany and the United States. Routes, Roads and Landscapes”<sup>2</sup> addresses the question of what we see when we drive. The view from the road has been one of the important ways of grasping, understanding, and changing landscapes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As they tried to adapt the automobile to the landscapes surrounding it, landscape architects, planners, and automotive enthusiasts also altered landscapes to make them more amenable to the automobile. The article focuses on efforts in the United States and Germany to build roads with the prime goal of providing pleasant landscape vistas to drivers and passengers.

The third and last section of this issue brings us back to the beginning. In “Flusser in Robion” Dirk-Michael Hennrich compares the tropical landscape of Brazil with the European landscape of the French Provence, focusing on the importance of this relationship within Vilém Flusser’s work in Robion. This small town of the Provence in Southeastern France, was the second exile of Vilém Flusser and his wife from the early 1970s to his death in 1991. The landscape of the Provence attracted many philosophers, writers and artist and represented for Flusser a sort of Anti-Brazil. Hennrich has also taken a few pictures of these surroundings. I have included four of them.

This is the last time *Flusser Studies* is going to appear in the present form. Starting in May 2013 and *Flusser Studies* 15 the interface of the journal will change entirely. One of our intentions is to

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<sup>2</sup> This text was first published in *Routes, Roads and Landscapes*, edited by Mari Hvattum, Britta Brenna, Beate Elvebakk and Janike Kampevold Larsen, Ashgate, Farnham 2011, p. 125-138. We thank the editors for their kind permission to republish this essay in *Flusser Studies*.

make the reading experience of the journal more pleasurable and enticing. We are also going to add the possibility of leaving a comment after each of the contributions, hoping to increase the dialogue with our readers as well as the exchange of ideas within the community of people interested in the work and life of Vilém Flusser.

Rainer Guldin (Editor-in-Chief)

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