

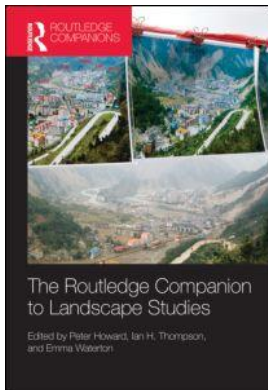
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# Landscape, performance and performativity

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Through the last decade there has been a critical engagement with notions of landscape – as process, as practice – within the social sciences and humanities. This work problematizes the ways in which, since the 1980s and in part for much longer, landscape had been conceptualized. This adjustment raises new challenges and potential for the practice of landscape-related research. Similarly, it raises issues concerning the relationship between institutional notions of landscape and this wave of re-conceptualization. At the centre of these challenges and opportunities is the rethinking of landscape as process rather than object; subjectively ‘in the making’ rather than as an assemblage of physical features.

This chapter presents the key themes in this re-grounding of landscape and outlines its consequences for landscape research. At its centre lies a consideration of matters of performance and performativity. It is argued that these emergent concepts mobilize new approaches to both discussions that surround the matter of landscape and fresh ways of professionally engaging with it in adjusting, conserving and changing the material with which professional landscaping is handled. Despite the apparent complexity and awkwardness of the terms considered in this chapter, they address very practical, real-life and place matters. The chapter commences with an articulation of the arguments surrounding what performance and performativity are, and their critical orientations of theory. From this discussion emerge directions for further investigation, understanding and thus application in work related with landscape. The chapter then unpacks the emergence and key approaches in performance and performativity, and related terms, and directs explanation towards making sense of landscape. This discussion, as performance itself, attends to a very individual, human level and the importance of its feeling, away from representational closure. This positioning of performance–performativity in matters of understanding landscape is articulated through recent debates concerning space and the idea of *flirting* with space.

Awkwardly, the understandings so far are taken next to matters professional – practitioners, academic and otherwise. It is argued that an engagement with performance–performativity is valuable, crucial and, moreover, practical in progressing the professional affect on the sites that individuals encounter in their lives. In the final section, an emergent case for further understanding what landscape is and how it works, and the orientations of research and professional practice conclude the chapter.

## Performance, performativity and traditions of representation

Performance is a term often associated with particular procedure, repetition and certainty. In her writing, Judith Butler (1997) discusses the ways in which our practice and behaviour are shaped by, for example, gender. Exemplified in dance, particular patterns and intensities of movement are proscribed (Nash 2000). Each 'performance' is done, enacted, the same; each time reaffirming its content, character and value. Likewise with the former grasp of performance, what we identify in or as landscape may be explained through the power of structures, in particular those of representations: contexts through which landscape is experienced. Those contexts have been identified as aesthetic, often historically given or channelled; particularly affected, even shaped and determined, through literature, painting and other arts and designs. Thus, landscape is contextualized in particular exercises of power and ideology (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). Such explanations privilege context and imply a linear and structural way in which landscape is given meaning and value.

The idea that landscape, as, for example, dance, is contextualized in the way it is grasped epitomizes a representational way of thinking about landscape or understanding how it works. Moreover, in the case of landscape, this representational 'perspective' privileges landscape as experienced visually – concerns ways of *seeing*; features composed in perspective and particular aesthetics. Individuals 'see' sites they visit through a 'gaze', marked by detachment and oversight (Rose 1993). Representations act as *the* referent and channel for knowing landscape.

Repetition does not fulfil the whole character of performance: performance varies, and may bear the traces of the individual performer's gesture (Ness and Noland 2008). Practice, doing things, may occur through untaught ways of action, as Iris Marion Young (1991) acknowledged of her daughter's growing up and how she threw a ball. Dance has been articulated as a bodily practice of endless individual variation (Thrift 1997). Just as dance has been unscrambled from merely its contextual determination, so has landscape. In the past decade and more, a serious rethinking of landscape has emerged. One key influence on this revision has been work influenced by performance studies and in particular awkwardly named work on performativity.

Performance understands the manner, the complex character of the ways in which we engage in doing, acting, getting a grasp on how and where we are. Performance is a component of the active and felt way in which we do things and feel about them. Performativity happens in performance. This way of thinking about how we encounter space or landscape emerges in a webbed collection of theories unfortunately labelled 'non-representational theory', significant across a wide range of disciplines and influential discussions in humanities, social sciences and art theory (Thrift 2008; Crouch 2010b). This new arena of theory gives emphasis away from the affect and power of representations, and their familiarly senior partner, the visual, in forming and shaping the way the individual understands and values the world and things they and others do. Instead of examining the work of representations it examines moments of occurrence; things as they happen; connections between things that happen and how they feel and are understood and valued. The emphasis of the performative in performance is a significant component of this collection of new theoretical work, and perhaps of particular insight for studies of landscape. Unfortunately, the label's epithet 'non-' here implies the exclusion of representational approaches, in this case for landscape; rather, our thinking can, and needs, to be inclusive in considering how representations and performativity *relate*.

Particular aspects of performativity come in relation to its potential to reconstitute life (Grosz 1999). Butler's emphasis on performance and performativity is in terms of: being ritualized practice, working to pre-given codes, habitually repeated, and conservative (Carlsen 1996). However, she acknowledges the possibility whereby relations with contexts may be

reconfigured, broken, adjusted, or negotiated (Lloyd 1996; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000) thus affecting, as well as being the affect of, context. Performativity – in the opportunities, breaks, unexpected occurrences and happenings in life, in doing, feeling and thinking, the unexpected – means that change is an open book. Things are not constrained by contexts and their communication in representations. Things can happen ‘anew’; in the moments of being alive.

Being somewhere, for example, can feel different from the way that ‘where’ was expected to feel; even in the feel of somewhere different from when we may last have been there. Furthermore, the performativity in ‘performing’ a site, an experience, emerges in part in things we do and the way we do them; and in relation to where we are. One fascinating component of performativity – in terms of the unexpected, half-expected and the intended – is that all these factors work and commingle; they can be useful in how we negotiate our lives in relation to situations in which we find ourselves, for example our surroundings. Elizabeth Grosz’s and others’ discussions of how we can find ourselves doing things, using and visiting particular sites, places, through the time of our living, involve multiple and relational tendencies towards ‘holding on’ and ‘going further’ (Grosz 1999; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; Crouch 2003). Moreover, performance and performativity work, not as poles of opposites, in bi-linear succession, but in flows, oppositions and conjunctions; the predictable and the unexpected commingling in sometimes subtle, sometimes dramatic ways. Performance and performativity are lively, active and uncertain.

Although performance can emphasize the framework of everyday protocols, the performative errs towards the potential of openness. The reconfiguring, or reconstitutive, potential of performance is increasingly cited in terms of performativity; as modulating life and discovering the new, the unexpected, in ways that may reconfigure the self, in a process of ‘what life (duration, memory, consciousness) brings to the world: the new, the movement of actualisation of the virtual, expansiveness, opening up’ – enabling the unexpected (Grosz 1999: 25). Thus, the borders between ‘being’ – as a state reached – and ‘becoming’ are indistinct and constantly in flow (Grosz 1999).

Performance and performativity are not distinct areas of theory. Crucial to their explanatory value is the understanding of things acting in relation with one another. A focal point in non-representational theory, as emerges in the following section, concerns the ways in which matters, including matter, are no longer understood in separate channels or spheres of action and category. The ways things happen, are felt, carry meaning and may be given value relate to one another; things happen ‘in relation’. Performativity and its consequences in our lives may adjust the affect of representations; and vice versa. They commingle.

The ideas surrounding performance’s performativity demonstrate and explain how we, in our actions, intended and in the gaps of uncertainty between the intended and what and how things actually happen affect, lend character, to our surroundings in the broadest sense. The components of landscape, and the ways in which landscape works, are no exception. The materiality of our surroundings and the way in and through which we relate to them, with them, can be active in our ‘holding on’ and ‘going further’. In the next paragraphs, the ways in which this process happens are articulated.

### **Landscape in flirting with space**

Positioning performativity and performance in relation to landscape is to be achieved through a short detour through the notion of space. Here, I consider the way we encounter what is around us through a curious notion of ‘flirting’. The idea of flirting is to suggest a nuanced,

contingent, uncertain, fluid character of the ways in which in our lives we encounter and engage the materiality around us. In this chapter I am not going to engage particular theory surrounding this notion of flirting with space in depth, but merely to acknowledge influences (see Crouch 2010a, 2010b). The energies that flirting with space generates emerges from, for example, the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), who have helped unravel and unwind familiar philosophies of the vitality of things, the multiplicities of influences and the way they work in a world of much more than the result of human construction. They offer a means to rethink the dynamics of space. Their term *spacing* introduces a fresh way of conceptualizing the process-dynamics of the unstable relationality of space/life and space/time. Spacing occurs in the gaps of energies amongst and between things; in their commingling.

Space becomes highly contingent, emergent in the cracks of everyday life, affected by and affecting energies both human and beyond human limits. Spacing has the potential, or in their language *potentiality*, to be constantly open to change; becoming, rather than settled (Doel 1999; Deleuze and Guattari 2004; Buchanan and Lambert 2005). In these respects there is resonance with Massey's conceptualization of space as unfixed; always in construction and relational – taken to a more human character in everyday life. These cracks and gaps are the sites and moments of performativity in our performing space; often intimate and momentary, but with the potential of much larger significance in doing, feeling and thinking. They relate to the tactics of de Certeau (1984), although he tended to emphasize their intentionality with Bachelard's (1994) feeling of intimacy. New encounters, however seemingly familiar, have the potential to open up new relations. Just as performativity has the character of holding on and going further: security of feeling and identity, and adventure, trying, or discovering the new, these may be characterized as and in being and becoming; both passive and dynamic (Crouch 2003, 2010a, 2010b).

Sight is felt, but in a mingling of senses, feeling and thought. Ness and Noland (2008: xiv) observe that gesture 'cannot be reduced to a purely semiotic (meaning-making) activity but realizes instead – both temporally and spatially – a cathexis deprived of semantic content ... gesture can ... simultaneously convey an energy charge'. Phenomenology connects a 'fleshiness' in the way our performativity works. For the space-philosopher Casey, meaning is framed in a kind of expectation (Casey 2005); and place is best understood as experimental living within a changing culture (Casey 1993).

How do these adjustments affect how landscape is felt, or the character of its expressivity in representation? J.B. Jackson (1984) argued the importance of mobility in understanding landscape, for conceptions of landscape as lived in and also moved amongst. Cosgrove's most powerful engagement with practised landscape is where he shifts dramatically from considerations of renaissance and other grand design to the character of walking in British hills and is brought to confront a very different landscape of everyday encounter (Cosgrove 1984: 267–9).

Landscape would seem to emerge in the poetics and expressivity of engaging space in complex, uncertain and widely affected ways. The art theorist Griselda Pollock refers to paintings of landscape as the poetics of experience, 'a poetic means to imagine our place in the world' (Pollock 2004: 25). The register of landscape in this way would seem to extend well beyond artwork that provides a mutually vibrant depth, of mutual accessibility. A poetics of space, in and as landscape, emerges performatively in the making of representations and in life more generally.

Through considering landscape beyond its earlier frameworks, representations emerge as part of a much wider relational field in which action and reflection can be grasped in a broader process of making space in spacing. Spacing offers a way to rethink how and where landscape relates in life. This more explorative, uncertain and tentative way in which spacing can occur suggests a character of flirting: opening up, trying out, unexpected, multiply affected and

embodied. Representations can be fluid and ‘real’ beyond their character as objects. Expressive poetics can emerge in spacing. Spacing offers a way of thinking through how space is given meaning and how landscape may relate in this process. In varying degrees of permanence and emotion and across different situatedness, individuals negotiate life. The emergent landscape evoked in any one location may bear traces of other, earlier experiences there and elsewhere, merging the ways in which landscape happens, relationally.

Cultural resonance emerges as one way in which landscape is informed. Landscape erupts in this process as an expressive and poetic act of which artwork is unexceptional. Representations are borne of the performativity of living, Matless (1992) noted. The liveliness of performativity is available to individuals who encounter these representations. Thus in no sense are representations fixed or closed to change. They are open to further interpretation and feeling. Representations and their projected cultural significance remain open too, ‘available’ for further work. The certainty of representations can be disrupted in this complex/multiple process of spacing: available, open and flexible. They can underscore processes of identity (Edmonds 2006; Tilley 2006). Rather than hold on too closely to the familiar debates concerning institutional power, space and its ideologies of landscape, often those tenors of landscape design, there is potential of diverse constitutions of identity through the performative emergence of landscape. Ideas of ‘land’ and feelings of identity through belonging and tensions relate with the contingent constitution of attitudes, values and meanings that become affective through practice and subjectivity.

The materiality of surroundings can collide with something else that resonates a sense of our own lives and has the power to reassemble it. Such intensities of significance, or merely calm moments of reassurance, happen across the range of performativities and their circulation in representations. Landscape resonates a capacity of belonging, disorientation and disruption. Landscape is not perspective and horizon, or lines, but felt smudges, smears, kaleidoscope, a multi-sensual expressive poetics of potentiality, becoming and poetics.

### Landscape as encounters’ expression

Landscape is a word that has considerable popular purchase. The ‘stuff’ that is often substituted for what is meant by landscape tends to be more in terms of countryside, but it can also include, broadly, the assemblage of landforms, concrete shapes, fields, gutters, designed spaces and serendipitous collections of things. Implicitly included are our own bodies that are now enlivened into the ‘landscape’. Cresswell (2003) persistently points to a problem with the (merely) commonsensical character of ‘landscape’, yet prefers the even more prevalently popular word *place* as a relevant geographical category, as do Massey (2005) and Tuan (2001). Moreover, reflecting on the tradition of understanding landscape, particularly in human geography, Cresswell (2003) claims the tendency in the conceptual grounding of landscape into the early twenty-first century as an ‘obliteration of practice’. In this section, I attend to practices’ performativity: first, by examining art practice, then everyday lives and their flexible landscapes in construction.

In wandering around parts of England, the Cornish and International Movement artist Peter Lanyon wanted to express in words as well as paintings and constructions his affective emersion in what he called ‘environments’, as a means to break with traditions of ‘landscape’. These environments or spaces provoked responses, feelings and ideas in his process of painting (Crouch and Toogood 1999; Crouch 2010a, 2010b). His paintings sought to express movement, and the tensions he felt in wandering, turning, and so on. Of course, the immediacy of these encounters combines with other durations of feeling and encounter at longer trajectories. Contexts of representation and memory affected his art practice. Repairing damaged planes in wartime, he

had heard – and continued to hear – stories of the hardness and insecurity of labour in his craggy corner of the world, in deep mines under the sea. His tuition with more traditional artists gave him the ability to see and to structure. His conversations with the Norwegian constructivist sculptor Naum Gabo's fascination for both immanence of possibility, almost infinite manual and emotional performativity with space in making constructions. Their conversations contributed to the 'contexts' developed with his phenomenological and performative encounters and a feeling of going further, and holding on.

There is an embodied character of his encounters that were evidently profoundly performative. As Lanyon walked he felt surrounded by space but also, implicitly, he was feeling varying intensities of different moments and memories. Varying sensualities, movements and stillness merge and flow through his work, commingle inter-subjectively and with expressive character. The work involved walking in the areas he sought to paint and, later, gliding. In doing his artwork he would walk an area, return to his studio, paint, return to the area, and so on, reworking his art (Crouch and Toogood 1999). Painting and making constructions were mutually enfolded in the way he worked.

He noted acute momentary awareness: 'flowers moving', 'gates uneasy' with themselves; at one moment the cliff and sea being on one side at one angle; the next, at the other. Taking these moments to the studio, he worked bodily in intimate and large movements against the canvas, inscribing, scraping, turning his body in expression of his ways of moving and of experiencing space. He likened the rhythms of painting to those of gardening, but acted also in urgency and anxiety with the tortured histories and lives in what he painted.

Art theorist Barbara Bolt argues that:

it is not an easy matter to produce an intense series (of artwork) that is transformative; to do so is likely, to say the least, to rely on openness and becoming in performance; indeed much the same may apply to the practice of everyday life.

*(Bolt 2004: 184)*

Bolt emphasizes the performativity of landscape. Taking the idea of performativity in and of artwork further, representations continue to participate in flows of poetic possibilities in their public encounter. Art practice comes through these connected observations as happening way beyond the 'borders' of easel, studio and gallery, and works from life, everyday feelings and performativities, as Lanyon spoke, familiar sites habitually visited one day just come across with utterly new feeling, 'unawares'. I have investigated the 'landscape' of the community gardener, allotment holder. The following paragraphs engage their performativity and/of landscape.

Community gardener Carole Youngson describes gardening in the following way:

[W]orking outdoors feels much better for your body somehow ... more vigorous than day to day housework, much more variety and stimulus. The air is always different and alerts the skin, unexpected scents are brought by breezes. Only when on your hands and knees do you notice insects and other small wonders. My [community garden] is of central importance in my life. I feel strongly that everyone should have access to land, to establish a close relationship with the earth ... essential as our surroundings become more artificial.

*(Crouch 2003: 1956)*

As a community gardener, Youngson articulates an emergent feeling about space that is also a way of making sense of her life: an ethics of rented land and ecology, a sense of touch and body movement, the affect of nature in loosely articulated fragments. An active feeling of calm tension between holding onto particular identities, values and gentle poetics is explored and

deepened in fresh ways through what she does and where she does it. In the negotiation of meaning and relationships, attitudes can adjust. She makes an 'art' of this, relationally patterning the ground and her feeling of it through what she does and how she does it; a situated practice and performance that builds and reassures and agitates. In Youngson's expression of her feeling, there is a curious combination of intense engagement and the self almost lost in a wider intensity of events through which landscape is detonated.

Spending time in unfamiliar spaces 'away from routine' (in sense both of distance and feeling) offers an experience that involves a space of performance that can be acutely open and sensitive to the affects outside the self; sites, in the most gentle encounter of flirting with space, can be transformed in our expressive poetics. Norwegian geographer Inger Birkeland narrates a visit to the Arctic Circle at midsummer in Scandinavia:

In the evening I was waiting for the deep red midnight sun. I was alone but didn't feel lonely. We were many who shared the act of waiting for the midnight sun. ... Even if we were strangers to each other, there was a mutual feeling of waiting for the midnight sun ... as more and more visitors arrived at the cliffs, I felt like I was walking in a multicultural, multi-coloured city. ... The words uttered were uncomplicated, the kind of words that sound trivial outside the there and then. But they were not trivial, rather they represented another way of creating meaning out of the meaningless, Order out of Chaos, light out of darkness.

*(Birkeland 1999: 17)*

Yet in habitual practice, such as periodically spending time at one familiar site can offer similar experience. A feeling of being detached yet full of emotion emerges in the example of regular short distance recreational vehicle travelling (caravanning) in England:

it all makes me smile inside. I mean, everyone just comes down to the ford and just stands there and watches life go by. It's amazing how you can have pleasure from something like that. I just sit down and look and I get so much enjoyment out of sitting and looking and doing nothing. We wake up in the morning, open the bedroom door and you're like breathing air into your living.

*(Crouch 2003: 1955)*

Just like the allotment cultivator, the site and its materiality, weather and air, crumbly soil and other things, become conjured up through the uncalled moments of performativity. The feeling of oneself, others and materiality around us can take on new significance in a process of flirting with space; it becomes landscape. What they say appears to exceed the prefigured and emerges from doing. In these two brief narratives we can identify the 'conjuring up', the occurrence of landscape; sometimes temporary, sometimes more lasting, and returned to in our feeling.

### **Participation in landscape and pointers for more investigation**

Landscape professionals and practitioners can be involved in constituting something of the meaning and feeling of landscape in individuals' lives. However, there is a need to embrace the feeling and expressive potentialities of that living; perhaps to suggest and to leave opportunities; not to confine or to limit expressions. In working through these observations on landscape, it becomes evident that closure in design-ing, or landscape-ing, is problematic. It is possible, eminently, to shape a site; to include colour, register and intensity in different ways such that it may affect or 'colour' feeling. Crucially, the encounter with and register of materiality in our



performance is bodily, not merely visual. Landscape is not the assemblage, however forethought, of materials, living and non-living. Those are the materials that may be engaged performatively in the performance of space in a manner of flirting.

Landscape as production of design, conservation and restoration practices and so on can affect feeling, meaning, values and attitudes. Performativity offers a rich and exciting challenge and opportunity. Work on allotments and community gardens in design and sensitivity and open aesthetics is exemplary (Crouch and Wiltshire 2005). The notion of providing permanent or total landscape opportunity in pre-figured 'landscapes' is usually mistaken. It is acknowledged that there is an affect of context and that includes intended professional work, yet of course landscape is more than that. Performativity challenges the intervention of the designer and her creativity. Everyone participates in the creativity available anywhere. Whilst necessarily sensitive and responsive to non-human life, in such as conservation, openness and sensitivity is crucial. Design can close the potential of performativity. Design must be participatory, and yielded through appropriate investigative methods.

One line of travel for landscape as constructed affect on a poetics of landscape concerns how its doing can be informed through researchers' investigations. The character of its research needs, in order to assist individuals' performance–performativity, is one that is generous, engaging, empowering, that acknowledges the importance of individuals' lives in doing and feeling; flirting and encountering. Too frequently 'research' into what individuals like is reductively posed in largely predetermined sites of answers to questionnaires, and, more reductively, in 'look-checks' on given, selected visual material. These, especially the latter, bear no resemblance whatsoever to the performative–performance character in the occurrence of landscape; indeed, they can occlude rather than include what is happening. They can present flows of power rather than giving of power.

In-depth discussions, conversations and open interviews offer means to break from the constraints of familiar landscape-related investigation. Landscape or, rather, the opportunity of the expressive–poetics landscape can be, can enrich human (as well as non-human) lives. Landscape is enmeshed with feelings of belonging, disorientation; belonging–disorientation–belonging being an active performative cycle (Crouch 2010b). Landscape emerges in the memory amongst individuals, probably more than in its pre-figuring (Crouch 2009). Investigations – with individuals and clusters of individuals – requires a participatory approach, as with design itself.

From thinking through the *occurrence* of landscape in and through performance and its performativity, it becomes evident that familiar evaluations of 'landscape' can become enormously problematic in the nuanced, human complexity of what landscape is and how it happens. Finally, there is a rich terrain ready for understanding, in situ as in ideas, the ways in which representations and other contexts through which landscape may be felt, experienced and understood merge with, contest, rebound and flow in relation with processes like performance and performativity.

It is in doing and feeling that individuals, we, you and me – through our performativity – constitute, if momentary, our landscapes. These may be influenced by representations, or, perhaps more so, our own memories and the relation between this site and its materiality and our doing, and somewhere else; between our feeling and expressive poetics of this site now, and at other times. Landscape occurs.

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