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Editoriale

Slow Mobilities and Heritage Landscapes

Slow mobilities e paesaggi dell'Heritage

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Mobilities and landscapes are inextricably connected to each other: landscapes can be viewed as the settings or environments in which mobilities take place, while mobilities also shape and change landscapes. This relationship has been increasingly studied since the early 2000s, following what Mimi Sheller and John Urry termed the “new mobilities paradigm” (2006). Earlier landscape studies tended to conceptualize landscape as a relatively stable scene or cultural text, reflecting social meanings inscribed upon space (Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove, Daniels 1988). Following the mobilities perspective, however, we can reframe both landscape and society as dynamic configurations shaped by circulations of people, goods, and information. This has opened fertile ground for interdisciplinary inquiry into how societies in motion produce, experience, and govern the spaces they inhabit. From this perspective, mobility is not just an external force acting upon landscape but a constitutive dimension of it: landscapes are continuously (re)produced through movements and flows. Adopting mobility as both a theoretical position and a methodological approach within the social sciences and humanities, allows us to trace the marks left by the various forms of mobility that traverse a landscape (Biasori et al. 2023). At the same time, it also encourages us to understand landscape as something subjective, relational and inherently constituted by mobilities and immobilities (Merriman et al. 2008). This dual perspective links the physical infrastructure of movement with the phenomenological and representational dimensions of landscape experience (Meini 2008).

Emerging from the slow movement opposing the “fast-food” culture (Petrini 2015), slow mobilities can be defined as a “constellation of mobility”

made of “particular patterns of movement, representations of movement, and ways of practising movement that make sense together” (Cresswell 2010, 17) whereby the slowness is intended as an approach and a practice to relate to the world in a different way, sometimes connecting and others disconnecting from it (Fullagar et al. 2012). Considering slowness as a verb, as suggested by Vannini (2014), we focus on the act of slowing down and its relational nature, which is far less intuitive than is generally acknowledged. Rather than being only a component of the sustainable mobility paradigm (Banister 2008), it concerns material practices combined with cognitive work and the emotions involved in performing deceleration: a combination of bodies, objects, media, technologies, and landscapes (Cisani, Rabbiosi 2023).

The second focus of this special issue is on heritage landscapes. These are broadly understood as landscapes that carry recognized cultural, historical, social, and/or ecological value, and that are actively shaped by processes of memory, identity, and stewardship (Harvey, Waterton 2015; Pettenati 2022). They are not simply “old” or scenic places: they are spaces where past, present and future intersect through practices, meanings, and management regimes. The debate on heritage landscapes reflects a broader shift in landscape thought from viewing landscapes as static scenes of the past to understanding them as living, relational, and socially produced environments. Early heritage frameworks, including UNESCO’s cultural landscape category, framed landscape primarily as a container of cultural and natural values to be identified and preserved. This view aligned with traditional conservation logics and aesthetic traditions, often privileging expert authority and visually legible, monumental landscapes. In contrast, subsequent scholarship has emphasized that heritage value arises through social practices, memory, and everyday inhabitation, repositioning landscape as a process rather than an object (Harvey, Waterton 2015). In the Italian debate, the geographical nature of heritage has also been highlighted by Dematteis, who emphasized how geography can help to interpret the systems of social relations on which values are based, in their spatial and environmental articulations, situating them within specific territorial contexts, at different scales. The recognition of the relational nature of heritage and the socio-cultural multiplicity of values transforms what could be very simple representations into complex, transcalar and multicentric representations (Dematteis 1998). Contemporary debates, in fact, increasingly foreground the temporal, political, and ecological dimensions of heritage landscapes. Scholars highlight how landscapes embody ongoing negotiations between continuity and transformation (DeSilvey 2017),

and between institutional narratives and local, vernacular engagements (Robertson 2016), as it is well reflected by this special issue. Rather than sites of preservation alone, they are now approached as spaces of care, adaptation, and future-making, linking heritage practice with questions of sustainability, resilience, and posthuman ethics (Holtorf, Högberg 2021).

The role of mobilities in studying heritage landscapes is therefore complex and far from straightforward. While this is certainly not the place to provide a complete classification, this special issue offers at least four different perspectives through which to interpret this connection. The four perspectives presented below serve as categories for dividing the papers included in the special issue, but they are also intertwined in all the works, as they are not mutually exclusive.

Firstly, slow mobilities can be regarded and analysed to discover heritage landscapes, thereby establishing a connection between people and the landscape. Gasparini and Mariotti analyse the varied perceptions of the Primaro trail, a heritage landscape and slow-mobility corridor that follows the banks of the old Po di Primaro river. By contrasting local initiatives with the priorities and goals of supra-local actors, they shed light on the contested representations and practices surrounding this slow mobility infrastructure and its complex heritage-making and governance processes. Challenging our conventional understandings of slow mobilities, Sabato presents motorcycle tourism as a form of slow tourism. Through ethnographic interviews, his article explores the perceptions and narratives of “slow motorcyclists”, who deliberately choose low-performance motorbikes and smaller country roads that prioritise the experience of the journey through the landscape over simply reaching the destination. Retracing the events linked to the (still ongoing) construction of the Apulian aqueduct cycle path, Gattullo demonstrates how slow mobilities can be considered as a medium through which to preserve elements of the landscape identity and to promote new configurations of spaces and places. Her paper analyses the non-institutional practices of commoning that have arisen around a living heritage such as the still functioning aqueduct and its cycle-path and raises critical questions related to its governance. In their paper, Lazzeroni, Romano and Zamperlin examine the relationship between slow mobility and urban landscape in the province of Pisa, adopting a data-driven approach based on the Strava Metro platform. Using GeoAI techniques, the authors analyze the connection between pedestrian routes, the distribution of cultural heritage, and the morphological characteristics of the urban environment, providing operational insights for urban plan-

ning, managing flows toward both major and minor heritage sites, and developing predictive models useful for monitoring slow mobility practices in near real time.

Secondly, mobilities can also be interpreted as agents in the creation of heritage landscapes. In this category, the traces, ancient routes and mobile patterns of the past have created the heritage landscape that is the focus of conservation and promotion in the present. In this vein, through mobile methodologies such as car interviews, Ciliberti and Mastrostefano's paper seeks to understand how integrated dialogue between past and present mobility can give rise to forms of heritagisation in line with the intrinsic characteristics of the territories, attempting to reconstruct a "spatial" heritage from below around the railway. Autiero, on the other hand, considers food as a mobile heritage, and slowness as a strategy and tool for reterritorialisation. Through site visits, mapping, diaries, interviews and photo testimonials, the author explores how the experiences of slow food production and consumption in Seville create a heritage landscape in response to standardisation. Through a comparative analysis of three culturally significant landscapes, Jabal Akhdar and Jabal Shams in Oman, Al-Ula in Saudi Arabia and Petra in Jordan, Zavettieri explores the complex relationships between geoheritage, desert landscape – an intrinsic element of traditional and tourist slow mobility – cultural perceptions and integrated management of cultural and natural heritage for the conservation and sustainable development of territorial resources.

Thirdly, slow mobilities are themselves heritage landscapes. Framing landscape as a practice, the mobile experience becomes inextricably linked to the perception and production of the landscape. This is what happens in the case of the qualitative, deeply embodied autoethnographic research experience carried out on the Cammino dei Briganti trail between Abruzzo and Lazio by Pasini, in which the mobility of walkers intersects with that of sheepdogs, and how these human-animal encounters can be elements of knowledge of the production processes linked to local heritage. Working animals are also the focus of Privitera's paper, which uses a mix of qualitative methodologies to examine the multifaceted nature of dogsledding in Lapland, considering it both a product of cultural heritage and a tourist attraction. Vincenti's paper, on the contrary, analyses the relationship between pilgrimage, slow tourism, and marginal territories through the case of Tuscia Viterbese, a historical transit area on the routes leading to Rome. Examining the historical evolution of travel toward Rome and the role of key routes (Via Francigena, Cassia, Clodia), and exploring the contemporary context, the case study highlights critical issues in governance, participatory processes, and

multi-stakeholder policies aligning with other papers' findings related to the need of stronger institutional coordination and more active community involvement.

Finally, slow mobilities can be conceptualised as a challenge to established views over heritage landscapes. The process of slowing down or mobilising the landscape, in this instance, engenders novel and alternative interpretations of the processes involved in the creation of heritage. For instance, Conti Puorger, et al., through mobile research on e-bikes, question the possibility of revitalising the mountains along alternative cycling routes, challenging the paradigms and the rhetoric linked to the connection between tourism, agrifood and slow mobility on which the processes of capital accumulation and extraction through the landscape are based. Cisani, Castiglioni and Di Matteo present "participatory treks" as methodologies able to activate multiple connections with heritage, in the context of the Ledro Alps and Judicaria UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Here slow mobilities act as an engaging experience to promote awareness, (re)producing heritage landscapes, eliciting values, activating connections and embodying practices of formal and informal exchange. However, it also reveals the complex and non-straightforward processes behind the ongoing heritagisation of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The final article uses the case of the moving sand dune Råbjerg Mile in the Jutland Peninsula as an emblematic example of nature's "slow mobility" and of a heritage landscape in motion. Using a theoretical framework based on social-nature theories and a document-based analysis of legislation, conservation plans and administrative materials, Castiglioni and Torero reconstruct the dune's geomorphological dynamics and explain why the Danish government decided not to stabilise the dune, but rather to preserve its mobility and accept its potential future impact on infrastructure and settlements. Their findings emphasise the conflict between conservation and adaptation, the significance of nature's inherent mobile and relational values, and the necessity of adopting a resilient, forward-looking management strategy.

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