

## Routes, Roads and Landscapes: Aesthetic Practices en route, 1750 – 2015

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The project studies the aestheticization of the modern landscape, i.e. the ways in which the landscape, from the Enlightenment until today came to be construed as an aesthetic object with particular aesthetic values.<sup>1</sup> The vehicle for the investigation is infrastructure: routes, roads, and railways that made their way into the landscape, simultaneously constituting it *qua* landscape and making it accessible for practical and aesthetic exploitation, reification, and interaction. The scope of the study is twofold. We investigate the ways in which various kinds of routes have shaped modern conceptions of the landscape by framing it as a view, an aesthetic object, or a place for interaction, and we inquire into the role of the route itself, both as an aesthetic object and as a setting for aesthetic practices.

If 'landscape' is defined as culturally configured nature<sup>2</sup>, then infrastructure may be considered the single most important factor generating it. The route makes nature accessible, defining our viewpoint towards it and conditioning our involvement with it. As such, paths, roads and railways constitute poignant meeting points between nature and culture, representing as well as facilitating our relation to the natural world. Despite their significance, however, these infrastructural 'objects' have received little scholarly attention beyond their purely historical or utilitarian aspects.<sup>3</sup> This project considers the study of infrastructure a unique opportunity to engage with what the cultural geographer Tim Cresswell calls 'landscapes of practice'; landscapes as they are "*lived, embodied, practiced; landscapes which are never complete, not easily framed or read. ... What the idea of 'landscapes of practice' allows is an injection of temporality and movement into the static at the same time as practice is contextualized and given a frame.*"<sup>4</sup> Focusing on this dimension of dynamic interaction, we expand the domain of aesthetics from a reflection on art to that of *aisthesis*, insisting that practical, sensory acts of perception have significance for the way the modern landscape is construed, and that our 'sense' of the landscape is conditioned by the way we move through it.<sup>5</sup> Rather than looking solely at the *representation* of landscape and infrastructure, then, we engage with the route as an "aesthetic" practice which in a radical sense creates the landscape and defines our interaction with it.<sup>6</sup>

The scope of the project is historical as well as contemporary. On the one hand, we investigate contemporary conceptions of the natural and cultural landscape by tracing their historical and theoretical genealogies. On the other hand, the project brings to light a virtually unknown historical material which may in turn contribute to current conceptions both of the landscape itself and our practical, aesthetic and theoretical involvement with it. Moving between a multi-disciplinary historical approach and contemporary aesthetic theory, the project investigates the ways in which processes of aestheticization shape and condition modern understandings of and involvements with natural, cultural, and urban landscapes.

### Material

Infrastructural interventions such as paths, routes, roads and railway lines reflect the cultural and aesthetic construction of the natural landscape in the modern period, and provide valuable insights into the interaction between man and nature. The project identifies three distinct moments in this interaction,

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<sup>1</sup> C.f. W. Lipp's convincing demonstration of the affinity between the aestheticization of nature and the formation of modern aesthetics around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *Natur, Geschichte, Denkmal; Zur Entstehung des Denkmalbewusstseins der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus 1987.

<sup>2</sup> As defined by among others J. Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfection: the practice of garden theory*, London: Thames & Hudson 2000. K. Olwig accounts for the rich history of the concepts of 'nature' and 'landscape' respectively in *Landscape, Nature and the Body Politics*, Madison Wis.: UWP 2002

<sup>3</sup> The interest in the cultural significance of infrastructure is growing internationally, as indicated by among others T. Cresswell *On the Move: Mobility in the modern Western World* (London: Routledge 2006), P. Merriman "Operation Motorway: landscapes of construction on England's M1 motorway" *Journal of Historical Geography* 31/2005, T. Edensor, "Automobility and National Identity: Representation, Geography and Driving Practice", in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21(4-5) 2004 and "M6: Junction 19-16: defamiliarising the mundane roadscape" in *Space and Culture*, 6(2), 2003. See also C. Macy and S. Bonnemaison *Architecture and Nature: creating the Americal landscape*, London: Routledge 2003.

<sup>4</sup> T. Cresswell, "Landscape and the obliteration of practice" in K. Anderson et al. (eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. London: 2002 p. 280.

<sup>5</sup> *Aisthesis* (Gr.: 'sensuous perception') a significance which lives on in the phenomenological aesthetics of M. Merleau-Ponty, (*Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge, 1962), and which has received renewed attention in contemporary German aesthetics, e.g. G. Bohme's *Asthetik: Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*, Munich: Fink 2003

<sup>6</sup> This approach is inspired by among others the landscape theorist J. Corner, who sees the landscape as an ongoing medium of exchange, embedded and evolved within the imaginative and material practices of different societies at different times. *Recovering Landscape: Essays in contemporary landscape architecture*. NJ: Princeton Arch. Press 1999.

situating them in a Norwegian as well as an international context. Firstly (study 1a and b), the pictorialization of the natural landscape will be studied as it came into being in 18<sup>th</sup> century topographical literature and prospects, looking both at the royal voyages of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the pictorialized landscapes of 19<sup>th</sup> century national romanticism. Secondly (study 2a and b), we study the aestheticization of infrastructure and landscape alike as it came to expression in proto-modernist and modernist architectural discourse and practice, ranging from the 1850 railway developments to the motorway aesthetics of the 1950's and -60's. Thirdly (study 3a and b), we investigate the road and the landscape as aesthetic practices, most notably in the work of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration's on-going *National Tourist Route Project* (1995-2015) with its aim to present and promote Norwegian natural landscapes as aesthetic experience. This threefold material, thus, reveals three levels at which the aestheticization process is at work *en route*: the aestheticization of the road as a work of art, the reification of the landscape as picture and practice, and the journey as an "aesthetic" interchange between material and experiential phenomena. Pursuing the threefold process of aestheticization, the project sheds light on the route and the landscape as culturally constructed and reciprocal phenomena, inexorably inscribed into multiple webs of aesthetic practices.

### Theories and Methodologies

The project is rooted in core disciplines of the humanities, integrating aesthetic theory and cultural studies, the history of landscape, architecture, and urbanism, and the history of science. Furthermore, it draws on aspects of cultural geography and economic history, and aims to situate issues of landscape and road in an updated theoretical context. The project's multi-disciplinary approach is given by its subject matter. The modern landscape and its infrastructure is shaped by a complex web of cultural practices, economic and political realities, and aesthetic inclinations. To fruitfully examine such multifarious phenomena requires an approach which is widely informed yet historically succinct. We have adopted our overriding approach from contemporary *Begriffsgeschichte*, emphasizing the historical transformation of ideas and practices as a key to understanding their contemporary significance.<sup>7</sup> Subjecting the cultural construction of the modern landscape to both a historical and a theoretical inquiry, we explore a rich spectrum of ideas and practices which contribute to form both the landscape itself and our understanding of it. In this way, we hope to contextualize a material which in the Norwegian context remains distinctly under-theorized, and to situate what is often considered questions of engineering and economy into an ethically and aesthetically informed humanities framework capable of encompassing issues of cultural as well as environmental sustainability. Furthermore, we aim to develop methodological approaches that allow for a fruitful exchange between historical research and contemporary theoretical perspectives. The individual case studies are based on archival research as well as textual and visual interpretation of little known material, producing new historical knowledge and contributing to contemporary aesthetic, architectural, and philosophical discourses. We believe the combination of cutting edge aesthetic theory with meticulous historical scholarship is the particular quality of the project and its multidisciplinary project group.

### Project structure and output

The project involves an architectural historian (Mari Hvattum, AHO) a historian of science (Brita Brenna, TIK), a philosopher and road researcher (Beate Elvebakk, TØI) and a sociologist (Lars Frers, Technische Universität Darmstadt). Furthermore, it encompasses a post doc researcher in landscape theory / aesthetic theory and two PhD candidates, one of which is financed by AHO. The project runs over three years, encompassing an international symposium to which the project's international network will be invited (see below), one international conference, as well as regular project team seminars. The project seeks a balanced representation of gender, yet we hope that by involving three female senior researchers we contribute to rectify the marked gender imbalance in Norwegian academia. The project group aims to produce one internationally published anthology based on conference papers, five to seven papers

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<sup>7</sup> See e.g. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (eds.) *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Stuttgart: Klett 1972-97. This approach has by now a long tradition in architectural theory through the work of e.g. Anthony Vidler, Joseph Rykwert, and Adrian Forty.

published in international level 2 journals, as well as two monographs and two PhD theses as the final outcome of the project. A preparatory symposium involving the project group and its international network took place in May 2007, see below.

## INDIVIDUAL STUDIES

Study 1a: Brita Brenna (TIK / UiO)

### Tools, tours and vistas: aesthetic practices of nature-landscape in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century

This study will investigate the topographical descriptions of Norwegian nature in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Two forms of description dominate this material: the visual landscape depictions, such as prospects, prints and landscape paintings, and the topographical literature itself. Using these distinct forms of landscape/nature-descriptions as its vehicle, the study queries the meanings as well as the means of the descriptions: what counted as landscape and what counted as nature, for whom, where and how? And by what means were these landscapes described, represented, and transformed into works of literature and art? One main question to be explored is the relation between scientific practices and theories, and the production of Norwegian landscapes.<sup>8</sup>

'Landscape' and 'nature' were both coined with new meanings in this period in the Danish language. 'Landscape' as a territorial and political entity (as in the medieval landscape laws) had mainly gone out of use, and the term gradually came to denote the pictorial landscape.<sup>9</sup> 'Nature' with its wealth of meanings – most of which originally associated to ideas of essence, rule, and necessity – was only now starting to be used as a term for external, physical reality.<sup>10</sup> Given the fluid state of both these terms in this period, the study aims to investigate how this "external physical reality" was made into an object; a thing to write about and look at. What were the processes making 'Norwegian nature' or 'Norwegian landscape' into precisely that: nature and landscape? One central hypothesis is that the new use of 'nature' to denote physical, external reality is closely connected to the new use of 'landscape' as a pictorial term. It is the aim of the study to investigate the exact nature of this connection.

Two practices were instrumental in transforming the conceptions of nature and landscape in this period; the textual description of place in the topographical literature, and the depiction of place in paintings and prospects. Both were intimately linked to modes of travel.<sup>11</sup> All through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, visualizations of Norway were produced in connection with the King's tour through the country.<sup>12</sup> The royal tour was a glorification of the sovereign's reign, enacted through dramatic spectacles as a means to establish political power. Norwegian landscape-nature was made into a spectacle through the tour, mobilizing painters and the painters' techniques to make a suitable scene for the King's glorification. Most mid-18<sup>th</sup> century visualizations of Norwegian nature were thus directly connected to political power, and had the King as their intended recipient. They were also intimately linked to scientific activities, through the patronage and orders of scientific societies.<sup>13</sup> This tradition, however, was changing rapidly towards the end of the century, a change which interestingly enough corresponds to the emergence both of new visual techniques – most notably the aquatint – and of a new audience for the natural scenery. The "voyage picturesque" was introduced, making Norwegian nature the source of marketable sceneries for a national and international public who themselves were (potential) travelers.

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<sup>8</sup> The art historian I. Ydstie discusses such connections in the Romantic period. See for example I. Ydstie: "Ein Geflecht von Skizzenbüchern. Wissenschaftliche Vorstellung und bildliche Darstellung von norwegischer Natur in den 1820er Jahren" in *Expedition Kunst. Die Entdeckung der Natur von C.D. Friedrich bis Humboldt*. Hamburger Kunsthalle.

<sup>9</sup> K. Olwig: *Landscape, Nature and the Body Politic*, op. cit., A. Lie Christensen: *Det norske landskapet*. Oslo: Pax 2002.

<sup>10</sup> The substantial book on this in Danish is T. Bredsdorff: *Digiternes natur. En idéhistorie i 1700-tallets danske poesi*. København: Gyldendal 1975. See also L. Daston: "The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe", *Configurations* 6.2 (1998)

<sup>11</sup> N. Green: *The Spectacle of Nature. Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*. Manchester: MUP 1992 is an important inspiration.

<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of the century, a Dutch landscape painter (J. Coning) was sent to Norway to depict places the King had visited fifteen years earlier, in 1685. The 1733 tour was visualized in magnificent plates by a French drawing master, fully reproduced only in the 1990s. The 1749 Tour was followed by a Norwegian officer and etcher (Poul Isac Grønvold), but only one Norwegian scene survives. In 1788, a Dane followed the King to save his views for posterity (Erik Paulsen). See L. Østby: *Med kunstnarauge. Norsk natur og folkeliv i biletkunsten*, Oslo 1969, C. W. Schnittler: *Norges kunstneriske opdagelse*. Kristiania 1920, O.A. Øverland: *Det gamle Norge i billeder og tekst*. Kristiania u.å., M. Hauge: *Norge på trykk*, Oslo: Andresen & Butenschøn 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Most notably the landscape-painter Blumenthal produced his Norwegian landscapes on commission of the Danish Society of the Sciences to partake in a commemorative publication of the King's 1733 tour, and later for the use in E. Pontoppidan: *The First Natural History of Norway*. 1752-53.

A similar shift can be found within the topographical texts. Initially, the King was the intended recipient of the topographical descriptions, a genre which in Norway emerged with the 43 questions asked by the King to all diocesan governors in the country, leading to the frantic mobilization of state officials to procure information about natural, historical, political and cultural facts about their regions.<sup>14</sup> Some of the most notable of the topographical works were travel descriptions, and the whole tradition was partly inspired by the advices for how to describe and explore foreign countries, which were produced in scientific environments.<sup>15</sup> While the main function of the topographical tradition was to display economic resources and historical continuity, the tradition was also instrumental in linking the character of the people with the character of the nature-landscape. Increasingly, the topographical works were written, not to the king, but to fellow citizens, patriots, and societies of improvement.

This study will concentrate on the concrete processes and the means by which the landscapes came into being. Looking at scientific instruments, as well as representational strategies such as camera obscura and literary techniques, I will investigate the ways in which the modern Norwegian landscape is conceived and constructed both as a scientific and a pictorial entity in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Theoretically the project will engage with the history of art and science field, bringing to this science-study's sensitivities of the importance of tools and apparatuses of production for both aesthetic and scientific representational practices.<sup>16</sup>

#### Study 1 b: PhD Project

##### Routes and pictures: road building as aesthetic practice, 1790-1910.

This project investigates the reciprocal relationship between road design and artistic representation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It traces the development of Norwegian road practices from early riding paths to the first tourist roads, and looks at the ways in which these roads were represented in art. But it also puts the question the other way around, looking not only at the ways actual roads inspired artistic representation, but also at how artistic representation conditioned the design and planning of roads.

As John Dixon Hunt and others have demonstrated, 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape gardens sought their model, not in nature herself but rather the idealized landscape encountered in painting.<sup>17</sup> Insofar as the aim of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century garden design was not to *imitate* nature, but rather to extract her ideal essence, landscape painting seemed a far better model than did the 'messy' natural world.<sup>18</sup> Instead of art imitating life, the opposite was the case; the 'real' world was imitating art. Taking this conversion as its point of departure, this PhD project investigates whether a similar reciprocity is at stake in 19<sup>th</sup> century road design. To be sure, national romantic painters drew heavily on the picturesque routes that opened in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Briksdalsbre road (1888): the first Norwegian tourist road and a seminal source of inspiration for artists.<sup>19</sup> But is the opposite also true; that the planning, design and construction of 19<sup>th</sup> century roads were inspired by picturesque strategies borrowed from landscape painting? Certainly, 19<sup>th</sup> century urbanists such as Camillo Sitte explicitly advocated painting as model for physical planning, particularly for road design, yet this relationship has not been studied in a Norwegian context.<sup>20</sup> Looking at early representations of roads in visual arts (from early topographical maps and copper plate engravings to landscape painting, sketches, and late 19<sup>th</sup> century photography) as well as at archival sources documenting the construction and design processes of roads, this project examines the reciprocal relationship between art and road design in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Doing that, the project draws on insights from contemporary landscape theory, for instance Christophe Girod's notions of the landscape and

<sup>14</sup> The neat distinction between culture, nature, politics and history is, of course, mine. The king's 43 questions partitioned nature and society in quite different realms, see K. Røgeberg: *Norge i 1743*, Oslo: Solum 2004. For the topographical literature, see A. Eriksen: *Topografenes verden*, Oslo: Pax 2007 and S. Supphellen: "Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen i Norge i siste halvparten av 1700-talet, regionalisme eller nasjonalisme", *Heimen* 1979, XVIII. For a general discussion of conceptions of Norwegian nature, see N. Witoszek, *Norske naturmytologier: fra Edda til økofilosofi*, Oslo: Pax 1998.

<sup>15</sup> R. Boyle: *General Heads for the Natural History of a Country; for Scandinavia*, J. Faggot: "Tankar om fäderneslandets känning och beskrifwande" (1741).

<sup>16</sup> Classical in both traditions: C. Klonk: *Science and the Perception of Nature*. Yale UP, New Haven 1996, B. M. Stafford: *Voyage into substance. Art, science and the illustrated travel account, 1760-1840*. MIT Press, Cambr. Mass, 1984, B. Latour: *Science in Action*, Harvard UP 1987.

<sup>17</sup> J. Dixon Hunt: *Greater perfections, the practice of garden theory*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden*. London: Thames & Hudson 2006

<sup>19</sup> B. Rogan: *Mellom tradisjon og modernisering, Kapitler av 1800-tallets samferdselshistorie*, Novus forlag, Oslo, 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, Vienna 1889.

its infrastructure as productive rather than mimetic, and his use of art installations as a direct source for landscape design.<sup>21</sup> The project's material is largely art historical, yet its interpretative scope involves cultural and economic history as well as aesthetic theory.

Study 2a: Mari Hvattum (AHO)

### Framing nature: the architecture of railway travel, 1845-1910.

When Johann Gottfried Herder extolled the virtues of the North in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784), he particularly emphasized the 'naturalness' of the Nordic peoples.<sup>22</sup> While mainland Europe was stifled by its century-old civilization, the northern periphery possessed a roughness and immediacy which appealed to the proto-romantic Herder. The association of the north to the natural became commonplace with modernism and still echoes in contemporary architectural discourse, where Nordic architecture is often taken to represent a shunning of artifice and an immediacy of perception.<sup>23</sup> The association of the north with the natural raises interesting questions both in terms of aesthetic theory and architectural history. In what way may cultural phenomena such as architecture be deemed 'natural', and which are the conceptions of nature governing this discourse? Moreover: in what way does Nordic architecture use this notion of nature and the natural in order to construct and legitimize itself? These are the questions with which the present study engages. Inspired by Wilfried Lipp's study *Natur, Geschichte, Denkmal*, I examine the ways in which a historically constructed conception of nature impacts aesthetic and architectural discourse.

The study's empirical material is the architecture accompanying the large scale railway construction taking place from 1854 to about 1910 in Norway, particularly the railway stations and tourist hotels built in the explicitly naturalizing 'serpent style'.<sup>24</sup> This is an architecture which, as many scholars point out, appeals to Norway's medieval past in an attempt to craft an appropriate architectural expression for a new nation.<sup>25</sup> And yet, this historicizing gesture is bound up with ideas of nature as the origin and guarantor of nation and architecture alike.<sup>26</sup> The railway architecture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century bears witness to this naturalizing impulse on many levels. By making the wilderness accessible, the railway was quite literally framing nature, turning it into a landscape to behold and exploit. The architecture emerging alongside the tracks framed nature in its own way, 'translating' aspects of regional nature into cultural form. The prolific railway architect Paul Due, claiming to have taken both the "lofts and the people" as well as the valleys themselves as his "model" when designing buildings for the railway through Sætedalen, is an apt example.<sup>27</sup> This was an architecture that promoted 'natural' materials and construction types, and which sought a 'natural' architectural expression for the region and its people.<sup>28</sup> In the spirit of Montesquieu, Due envisioned architectural style as a translation of given natural conditions – climate, people, vegetation, and topography – into cultural form; an idea which has resonated strongly in modern Norwegian

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<sup>21</sup> Girof, "Vision in Motion: Representing Landscape in Time", in *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, Waldheim (ed.), N.Y.: Princeton Arch. Press, 2006, p.98.

<sup>22</sup> Riga and Leibzig: Hartknoch 1784.

<sup>23</sup> Sigfried Giedion promoted Nordic modernism as a 'natural' alternative to the International Style in *Space, Time and Architecture* (Harvard: HUP 1954, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), an idea which resonates in contemporary scholarship such as C. St John Wilson's *The other tradition of modern architecture*, London: Academy 1995, P. Blundell Jones' *Gunnar Asplund*, London: Phaidon 2006, as well as in *A+U's* recent issue on Norwegian architecture, (no 12, Dec. 2004).

<sup>24</sup> The railway development is chronicled in T. Bergh, H. Ryggvik, J. Gulowsen, *Jernbanen i Norge 1854-2004* (2 vols) Bergen: Vigmostad & Bjørge. The railway architecture is little documented, with the exception of the guide *Neste Stasjon: en guide til jernbanens arkitekturhistorie*, E. Hartmann, Ø. Mangset, Ø. Reissegg, Oslo: Gyldendal 1997. 'Dragestil' has been translated as 'dragon style' (e.g. Miller Lane, op.cit), yet 'serpent style' covers the loosely serpentine motifs of this architecture more accurately.

<sup>25</sup> See J. C. Eldal, *Historisme i Tre: "Sveitserstil", byggeskikkromantikk og nasjonal egenart i europeisk og norsk trearkitektur på 1800-tallet*. Oslo: UiO 1998. Both B. Miller Lane in her *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*. (Cambridge: CUP 2000) and M. Schwartz in *German Architectural Theory and the Search for Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: CUP 1995) make interesting references to the role of nature in national romantic thinking, yet do not develop the topic further.

<sup>26</sup> C.f. Lipp's analysis of the republican cult of nature developed after the French revolution. *Natur, Geschichte, Denkmal* op.cit.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Due, lecture in Skandinaviske Jernvægsmannaselskapet, 1902. This mimetic notion of architectural form is prevalent in 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural discourse from J. W. Goethe and Quatremère de Quincy to Gottfried Semper, yet is little reflected in Norwegian scholarship.

<sup>28</sup> Nature as a topos in aesthetic discourse has been studied by among others E. Panofsky, *Idea: a concept in art history* (New York: Harper & Row 1968), and M. H. Abrams in *The mirror and the lamp: romantic theory and the critical tradition*, (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press 1971). The concept's use in architectural thinking has received less attention, with the noteworthy exception of C. van Eck's *Organicism in Nineteenth century Architecture* (Architectura & Natura: Amsterdam 1995) which traces the organic paradigm in 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural thinking. See also M. Hvattum "Unfolding from within": modern architecture and the dream of organic totality" in *The Journal of Architecture* (4/2006, special issue on organicism and architecture. A. Forty's essay "Nature" in *Words and Buildings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000) surveys the topic well, while specialized studies such as S. Ringbom's *Stone, Style & Truth* (Finska fornminnesföreningens tidskrift 91/ 1987) provides an insightful analysis of the Nordic cult of natural stone.

architecture.<sup>29</sup> This mimetic and naturalizing impulse has received little scholarly attention, and neither its particular manifestation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, nor its forceful *Wirkungsgeschichte* in 20<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian architecture has been explored.<sup>30</sup> Analysing key works by railway architects such as Schirmer & von Hanno, Georg Bull, Paul Due, and Erik Glosimodt, the study inquires into the architectural, historical, and intellectual presuppositions of this naturalizing aesthetics. Furthermore, it looks at the ways in which this naturalizing aesthetics lives on in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Norwegian architectural discourse and practice, most explicitly in the writings of Christian Norberg-Schulz and the works of architects such as Sverre Fehn, Arne Henriksen, Carl-Viggo Hølmekbakk, and Jensen & Skodvin.<sup>31</sup> In this way, a little studied historical material may contribute to throwing new light on the aesthetic presuppositions of contemporary Norwegian architecture.<sup>32</sup>

## Study 2b: PhD-project

### The aesthetics of mobility: the motorway as a work of art in post-war urbanism

This PhD project studies the aestheticization of the motorway in post war planning. Modern architecture and town planning testifies to a long-standing fascination for movement, speed, and infrastructure. From Baudelaire's evocative definition of modernity as flux and Otto Wagner's early equation of the modern city with speed, the history of modernity has been intrinsically linked to the history of movement.<sup>33</sup> Corroborated through countless manifestoes, appeals, and projects, modernism was by definition an aesthetics of mobility, in which the car, the road, the railway and the airplane were elevated into icons of modernity.<sup>34</sup> In post war landscape urbanism, movement took on an even more crucial role, radically expanding the concept of mobility from infrastructure to the city itself. Faced with the problem of urban sprawl, loss of local identity and the annihilation of recognizable form in both the urban and the natural landscape, international avant-garde groups like *Team X* searched for a new aesthetics of mobility.<sup>35</sup> The vehicle for such an aesthetics was the motorway. As Peter and Alison Smithson wrote in 1968: "Today our most obvious failure is the lack of comprehensibility and identity in big cities, and the answer is surely in a clear, large scale road system – the 'Urban Motorway' lifted from an ameliorative function to a unifying function"<sup>36</sup> The motorway was elevated into a work of art, granting identity and comprehensibility to the sprawling landscape of the post-war urban conglomeration. In Norway, an echo of this attitude can be discerned in the National Roadplan of 1967 which proposes a motorway through the royal palace park in Oslo; a proposal fuelled as much by aesthetic as utilitarian considerations.<sup>37</sup>

This PhD study examines the aestheticization of the motorway in modernist and late modernist urbanism, focusing particularly on European post war discourse such as *Team X*. It looks at the ways in which the new focus on infrastructure as art allowed for an aesthetic redefinition of landscape and city alike, and studies the continued impact of this redefinition on post-modern planning practices.

## Study 3a) Beate Elvebakk (TØI)

### Road aesthetics as practice and discourse in the Norwegian Public Roads Administration

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA) is responsible for developing infrastructures in accordance with the European Convention for Landscapes, which aims to "promote landscape protection,

<sup>29</sup> *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, London: Academy, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> The topic has been interestingly explored in an American setting by Christine Macy and Sarah Bonnemaïson, *Architecture and Nature: creating the American Landscape* (London: Routledge 2003) which provides a major source of inspiration for the project.

<sup>31</sup> The latter are key contributors to the *Norwegian Tourist Route Project*, creating a fruitful link between this study and the post-doc project.

<sup>32</sup> An inspiration for this approach is provided by D. Leatherbarrow, *Topographical Stories: studies in landscape and architecture*. Philadelphia: UPP, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> C. Baudelaire, *The Painters of Modern Life* (1863) London: Phaidon 1969. Otto Wagner: *Modern Architecture* (1896) St. Monica: Getty 1988.

<sup>34</sup> Important examples being Marinetti's futurist manifesto of 1909, Le Corbusier's, *Vers une architecture* (1923), S. Giedion, *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferro-Concrete* (1927), as well as films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* from 1927.

<sup>35</sup> *Team X* was constituted in 1953 as a critical reaction against CIAM's conservative modernism. It consisted of among others Peter and Alison Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, Giancarlo di Carlo and Shadrack Woods, and provided a strong influence on Scandinavian architects and planners of the 1960's and 70's.

<sup>36</sup> P. And A. Smithson, "Urban infra-structure" in *Team X Primer*, ed. A. Smithson, Cambridge Mass.: MIT 1968, p. 48.

<sup>37</sup> There are many international parallels, e.g. Britain's M1 (as shown by P. Merriman "Operation Motorway: landscapes of construction on England's M1 motorway" *Journal of Historical Geography* 31/2005), and Benton MacKaye and The Tennessee Valley Authority's road plan of 1933, where the freeway was considered "an aesthetically sublime second nature". Macy and Bonnemaïson *Architecture and Nature: creating the American landscape*, op cit, p. 199.

management and planning.”<sup>38</sup> The Convention’s environmental vision states that “Transport shall not cause serious damage to man or environment.” More specifically, the issue of road aesthetics is presented as a choice between two possible strategies: “Roads are aligned and designed in accordance with two main principles; either as a positive contrast to the environment, or adapted to and anchored in it. For most roads the principle of adaptation will be the natural choice”<sup>39</sup>. Road aesthetics, then, is presented relative to a conception of nature or environment; the aesthetic quality of the roads will be a function of their interplay with pre-given structures, and the constructed roads are seen to have the potential to protect/respect or add to existing environments, but not, it seems, to re-define or transform them. For any given road construction, however, the NPRA needs to attend to a number of concerns, and will have to negotiate the sometimes conflicting requirements for mobility, safety, residential environments, cultural heritage, and “aesthetic values”. It is obvious that the interests of mobility will frequently be at odds with an idea of “protecting” landscapes, and road safety regimes will frequently have important repercussions for the spatial organisation transport.<sup>40</sup>

Contemporary societies have been described as societies of automobility,<sup>41</sup> indicating that all aspects of society are transformed by current modes of transport and travel, and that experiences as well as our environments and practices are being shaped by the car-system. From this kind of perspective, the landscapes can be seen as being framed by the vision of a being that is simultaneously encapsulated and mobile<sup>42</sup>, which raises questions of whom the beautiful roads are meant to appeal to: who is the inscribed spectator? Local residents, tourists, drivers, pedestrians, adults, children?

This project will study how the NPRA deals with the requirements for aesthetic roads, how landscapes are conceptualised and integrated in road design processes, and what aesthetic ideas are used as basis for current infrastructural developments. This includes an investigation into how concepts such as “adaptation”, “landscape” and “environment” are defined or reflected in the context of the work of the NPRA, and the practical consequences that these definitions have for road construction projects.

The study uses interviews, document studies, discourse analysis, and literature reviews.

Study 3b) Post Doc

### **Installing the landscape: *The National Tourist Route Project* as aesthetic practice**

This study addresses the issue of experienced landscape, transposing the discussions of representation and production of the landscape onto contemporary landscapes and landscape design projects. It investigates the borderline between nature, landscape design, and art, and explores what conceptions of nature *and* culture are being transmitted or produced in specific works of landscape design. The project investigates contemporary landscape design within a line of aesthetic discourses ranging from the picturesquely informed theories of Henry Whately to modernist conception of formlessness as this unfolds within sculpture and land art.<sup>43</sup>

Contemporary landscape theory often considers landscape design a productive activity in a literal sense. Theorists such as James Corner, Marc Treib and Christophe Girod, all regard landscape design as a cultural agent and landscaping as an innovative means to critically intervene into cultural habit and convention.<sup>44</sup> However, few contemporary landscape studies highlight the relationship between landscape design and human experience – the experience of form as well as of the interconnected relation of nature and culture. Exploring such relations has almost exclusively been a literary preoccupation, like Chateaubriand expressing the 18<sup>th</sup> century angst for the wilderness and the comfort of the cultural landscape, or Diderot explicating the similarities between scenic landscapes and painting, thereby enforcing the pictorial landscape of the enlightenment. Based on the belief that literature conceptualizes essential aspects of the landscape and our experiences of it, this study invites literary theory into landscape theory.

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<sup>38</sup> *European Landscape Convention*, Florence, 20.X. 2000. <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.vegvesen.no/cs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1162372673190&pagename=vegvesen%2FPage%2FSVSubSidelInnholdMal>

<sup>40</sup> Elvebakk, B: “Vision Zero: Reshaping Road Safety”. *Mobilities*, no 3, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Urry, J: *Sociology beyond societies. Mobilities for the twenty-first century*. Routledge, London, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Sheller, M. & Urry, J: *The City and the Car*. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. No 4, vol 24, 2000.

<sup>43</sup> Whately, Thomas: *Observations on Modern Gardening*, Dublin, London, 1770.

<sup>44</sup> J. Corner (ed.): *Recovering Landscape*, op.cit.

The project takes as its main empirical material *The National Tourist Route Project*. The Norwegian Public Road Administration are establishing 18 roads throughout Norway as designated scenic byways, inviting architects and landscape designers to design road-posts, view-points, pathways and various other facilities.<sup>45</sup> The road project seems to be choreographing bits of Norwegian nature, making it available to view, thus allying itself in to an 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition for panoramic nature. Like Saunder & Wilhelmsen's dramatically cantilevering viewing platform over the Aurlandsfjord, Stegastein, many of the *Tourist Route* installations seem simply to frame nature, continuing and heightening the pictorial landscape tradition discussed above.<sup>46</sup> And yet, the relationship between the viewer and the landscape established by these projects is a complex one, begging questions concerning both aesthetic experience and epistemological impact. The study undertakes a multifaceted investigation of these questions, looking at the "aesthetic" dimension of the road itself as well as at the aesthetic and epistemological nature of the roadside landscape. Three aspects are particularly important to the study: 1) Accessing 'wild' places, the tourist roads offer us contact with what John Dixon Hunt calls 'first nature', nature seemingly untouched by human intervention.<sup>47</sup> However, many of the installations draw the attention *away* from the scenery, onto the viewer's physical experience of being launched into nature. By consciously involving bodily sensation, the projects are hinting that the sublimity of the landscape experience no longer is located in the representation of landscape, but in the body of the beholder. Contemporary landscape design, then, calls for a notion of the landscape and our experience of it as a dynamic, interactive process rather than a fixed display in the picturesque tradition. This is one of the challenges to which the study attempts to respond. 2) Aesthetic roadside practices bear an implicit reference to non-designed roadside areas; the formless matter of 'regular' roadside landscapes – road cuts, fjord-sides, mountain-plateaus. The project investigates how the *Tourist Route* installations place themselves, both formally and experientially, in relation to formless nature and art. This involves looking into operative concepts from land art and recent landscape theory, for instance Robert Smithson's concept of *site*, defined as an unframed section of land,<sup>48</sup> or Christophe Girod's recent concept of "black holes": "the in-between scenes of landscape beauty", areas that we have become experientially accustomed to as "natural", though unimpressive, landscapes.<sup>49</sup> Both land art and the modernist *negative sculpture* have a capacity to mediate between the constructed and the non-constructed, between nature and culture, often seeking to frame and mark matter and nature *as* meaningless, random and insignificant.<sup>50</sup> The project seeks to explore the suspended appearance of nature as matter in recent road works, and to consider aesthetic experience *en route* in relation both to the moving views and bodily presence of car-driving, and to 'ordinary' non-aestheticized sites and sights.

*The Tourist Route Projects* offer a unique possibility to work with a material in progress, allowing the study to take into consideration not only the finished work but also the *process* of designing.<sup>51</sup> Situating these processes within a contemporary aesthetic discourse, the study poses questions such as the following: To what degree do the tourist road projects seek a world outside of cultural confinement, and to what degree do they answer man's basic longing for an unmediated nature? Are they merely "architecture on display" as some critics argue, or do they indeed offer a fruitful prism for understanding our relation to nature and landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The project seeks to employ these hermeneutically informed questions of form, nature and existence to contemporary practices that are integral to daily life.

<sup>45</sup> Some of which are presented in the catalogue *Detour: Architecture and design along 18 National Tourist Routes*. Ed. N. Berre, Oslo: Norsk Form 2006.

<sup>46</sup> For a picture of Stegastein, please visit this page: [http://www.norskform.no/default.asp?V\\_ITEM\\_ID=2269](http://www.norskform.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=2269). K. Grillner's *Ramble, linger, and gaze: dialogues from the landscape garden*, Stockholm: KTH 2000 provides inspiration when developing this perspective.

<sup>47</sup> J. Dixon Hunt: *Greater perfections, the practice of garden theory*, op.cit., p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> R. Smithson: *The Collected Writings*, Jack Flam (ed.) Berkeley: UCP, 1996, p. 153.

<sup>49</sup> C. Girod, "Vision in Motion: Representing Landscape in Time" in *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, Waldheim (ed.), Princeton AP, New York, 2006.

<sup>50</sup> R. Krauss, "Sculpture in the expended field", in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other modernist myths*, MIT Press, Mass, 1985.

<sup>51</sup> A work which elegantly frames the possible perspectives of this study is Snøhetta's construction of a Peter Dass Center at Alstadhaug in Nordland. This project marks the landscape in a radical manner, cutting straight through a mountain with a diamond saw. This mark is at present left open, begging the question whether a phase in a construction process may be regarded an extreme work of art?

Guest Scholar Project: Lars Frers, Technische Universität Darmstadt

### Impressive landscapes: Entanglements of nature and culture.

Challenging the modern divide between culture and nature, this study focuses on the multiple ways in which a supposedly passive nature – cut through by roads and railways, ordered and laid out for the eye of the traveler – develops an agency of its own; interacting with the people who build, experience, and perceive the landscape.<sup>52</sup> Treating what is presented as nature and what is construed as culture symmetrically, it becomes obvious that both can be the sources of change and adaptation. The materiality of things (rocks, plants, architecture, artifacts, animals, and human bodies) is in a constant process of change. Mountains erode, travelers tire, storms make trees crash onto rails, dead animals rot at the side of the road, and roadwork change the path of rivers. These processes influence the perceptions of those using and experiencing the landscape, establishing an “aesthetic” realm which conditions our conceptions of the landscape’s aesthetic quality. The experience of the sublime is a good example of this. The experience of awe when confronted with the horrible and incomprehensible in nature is related, both in Burke’ian and Kantian aesthetics, to the experience of an unbounded power unfolding itself beyond the reach of our senses.<sup>53</sup> Using the sublime as an “aesthetic” category, this study explores how the experience of the road is impacted by its diverse, dynamic, and often incomprehensible materiality.

Two processes come to the centre of attention here, both indicating ways in which landscapes and roads develop aesthetic and cultural agency. (a) Erosion: The slow deterioration and change of paths, landscapes, things, and people (in a biographical as well as an every-day perspective, as aging and fatigue). (b) Sudden discontinuities: Fires, floods, storm damage, ice rain etc. have a distinct impact on nature and architecture as well as on the way they are experienced. They interrupt and reorder supposedly stable settings and accelerate change. To deal with these challenging phenomena, the project employs a set of innovative methodological strategies serving to give full credit to the material aspect of its subject matter. Video-ethnography, photography and the quasi-archeological examination of places and artifacts will offer new perspectives on landscape and the way it encompasses very peculiar dynamics that constantly re-order and re-configure the aesthetic as well as the material.<sup>54</sup>

### Institutional framework and project leadership

The project is hosted by *The Oslo School of Architecture and Design* (AHO), in partnership with *Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture* (TIK) at the University of Oslo, and *Norwegian Institute of Transport Economics* (TØI). One of the project’s PhD projects is funded by AHO, who also hosts the post doc. The project has three international partners: *Centre for Territorial Studies at the University of Copenhagen*, *Department of Landscape Planning at The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences* (SLU), and *Department of Urbanism at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, Belgium. *The Norwegian Public Roads Administration* has a long standing research cooperation with AHO and will take part in the project symposia, seminars, and conferences.

**Dr. Mari Hvattum** from AHO is the project leader. Hvattum is an associate professor and Head of Institute of Form Theory and History. An architect and architectural historian with her PhD from Cambridge University, she is the author of a wide range of international publications including her 2004 monograph *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism* from Cambridge University Press. She is a contributing editor to the international journals *Architectural Research Quarterly* and *Positions*, and an advisory board member of the *Architectural Humanities Research Association*, UK.

**Dr. Brita Brenna** from TIK and **Dr. Beate Elvebakk** from TØI take part as senior researchers. Brenna is a historian of science, focusing particularly on the overlaps between natural history and aesthetic discourse in Norway in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Her previous work ranges from the Norwegian participation in 19<sup>th</sup> century international exhibitions to the early Norwegian natural history collections.

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<sup>52</sup> This perspective is inspired by among others B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press 1993.

<sup>53</sup> E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford U P 1990, and I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Frankfurt a M: Suhrkamp 1977.

<sup>54</sup> C. Goodwin, and U. Kissmann, (eds.) *Video Interaction Analysis: And How to Do it*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag 2008, and J. Collier and M. Collier. *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1986.

Brenna has long experience in multi-disciplinary work, particularly within feminist and cultural studies. She has been a visiting researcher at Max Planck and CSI, Paris. Elvebakk is a philosopher, specializing in issues of ethics and science, technology and society. She received the Royal Gold Medal for her PhD dissertation at UiO in 2004. Her recent works deals with ethics and traffic safety.

**Dr. Lars Frers** from Technische Universität Darmstadt participates in the project as a visiting scholar. A sociologist, Frers works on the interactions between materiality and social action in the research collaboration *Topologie der Technik* at TUD. His recent book *Einhüllende Materialitäten – Wahrnehmungshandeln an Bahnhof und Fährterminal* (Bielefeld: Transcript 2007) carries great relevance for the project.

*The Oslo School of Architecture and Design* is a dynamic institution whose multi-disciplinary faculty contributes to an innovative research environment. The project connects to several key research interests at AHO, such as landscape history, architectural theory, and aesthetics. It will benefit from the landscape and urbanism milieu at AHO, regularly attracting leading international landscape theorists and practitioners to the school. Institute of Form, Theory and History provides an internationally oriented research environment combining thorough historical research with cutting edge theoretical perspectives.

*Centre for Technology, Culture and Innovation* at the *University of Oslo* provides a multi-disciplinary framework for the project, with particular expertise in the overlaps between cultural and natural science discourses. TIK's Science, Technology and Culture group will be particularly significant to this project, with their ongoing research project; Nature and Science in Politics and Everyday Practice.

*Norwegian Institute of Transport Economics* is a national institution for transport research and development dedicated to carry out applied research on issues connected with transport and to promote the application of research results by advising the authorities, the transport industry and the public at large. Fostering a multi-disciplinary approach to road studies, TØI provide an important institutional framework for the project.

#### International network

In May 2007, AHO hosted an international symposium on Cultural Landscapes where the project group worked with its international partners including **professor Kenneth Olwig**, *Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences* (SLU), and **professor Bruno de Meulder**, Department of Urbanism at *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, Belgium. Together with **Dr. Frederik Tygstrup**, Centre for Territorial Studies at the *University of Copenhagen*, these scholars act as senior advisors to the project. As a result of the May symposium, the project group has become part of the *Nordic Landscape Research Network*, which will provide an important forum for future research.

The project network also encompasses leading scholars from several relevant fields who will participate in symposia, conferences, and informal collaboration. These include: **Professor Anne Katrine Geelmuyden**, *Norwegian University of Life Sciences*, specialist in landscape history and theory. **Dr. Vittoria di Palma**, senior lecture in art history at *Columbia University*, NY, working on ideas of wasteland and wilderness in 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural history. **Dr. Kelly Shannon**, professor of architecture and urbanism at *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, Belgium and visiting professor at AHO. **Dr. Cathrine Brace**, senior lecturer in human geography at the *University of Exeter*, working on landscape and national identity. **Mattias Qviström**, assistant professor at the department of Landscape Planning at the *Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences*, working on speed and the perception of landscape. **Dr. Gabriele Switek**, senior lecturer at the *University of Warsaw* and a senior curator of the National Gallery in Warsaw, working on contemporary land art and the transformation of the post-industrial landscape in Eastern Europe. **Professor Christine Macy** from Dalhousie University, Canada, author of a pioneer study of the cultural construction of the American landscape: *Architecture and Nature: Creating the American Landscape* (London: Routledge 2003), looking at infrastructure as the vehicle for the cultural reification of the American landscape.

The strong international network provides an excellent forum for scholarly exchange across disciplines and countries, fortifying the project's ambition to situate the Norwegian material into a wide international setting.