

Graham Fairclough (2012): *Via Tiburtina: Space, Movement and Artefacts in the Urban Landscape*, *Landscape Research*, 37:1, 137-139

Via Tiburtina: Space, Movement and Artefacts in the Urban Landscape
H. Bjur and B. Santillo Frizell (Eds)

Rome, Svenska Institutet i Rom, 2009, 239 pp., c. 173 figs (colour photos, maps, diagrams) and other photographs, ISBN 978-91-7042-177-98.

This book is multi-authored by 11 Swedish scholars working at the Swedish Institute in Rome or the University of Gothenburg in a collaboration mainly funded by the Swedish Research Council. It was conceived as a multidisciplinary, cross-period analysis of a tract of land that is loaded with historical associations, but easy to dismiss as chaotic modern urbanism. It represents not the rural, agricultural or 'green-field' landscape that is often the subject of landscape research, but the messy, ever-changing landscape of ancient urban cores, maturing suburbs and burgeoning, transient peri-urban or ex-urban so-called 'sprawl'. This book's authors do not make easy value judgements about this land, whether in its oldest or newest guises; they simply take it as they find it. As one chapter title says 'That's the way it is'; neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor ugly, but simply 'there'. But when viewed sociologically, archaeologically, or from the perspective of integrated landscape research, it becomes simply (or, rather, complexly) interesting, intriguing and informative.

As many have pointed out before, and as comparison of 'modern' urban maps with their pre-urban predecessors shows, it is not necessarily the great buildings, monuments, houses and shops that survive longest in the urban landscape. Rather it is the underlying structures—the property divisions and the streets, tracks and roads—that act as landscape's equivalent of human DNA. This book is about urban DNA.

The Via Tiburtina is the road eastwards from Rome to Tivoli. Long before Augustus, back into the Bronze Age, it was a first stage of transhumance towards the Apennines. Today its full course to Tivoli is almost entirely flanked by frequently changing factories, warehouses, barracks, retail parks and mass housing, which show us a full typology of twentieth-century social and economic transformations that is captured particularly well in the chapter 'From Agro Romano to Industrial Zone'. The road itself offers a ready-made narrative thread for the histories and transformations of this broad corridor sweeping to or from the hills. The road thus provides not only a frame for depicting all human life that has gone on here over 4000 years, but also a point of reference for modern life, teeming with traffic now like never before.

This book can be described as 'new wave' landscape research, an innovative piece of thinking and writing from a broad interdisciplinary perspective. Born out of dialogue between its editors, a spatial planner and an archaeologist, it also draws on the ways of seeing of architects, historians, economists, artists, geographers and classical archaeologists. To the landscape's obvious historical aspects, this breadth of vision adds the spatial planner's concern with trying to shape what happens next, and the artist's or writer's desire to capture how life is lived in the context of rich, often tangible, certainly palpable, time depth.

The book has three main parts. In Part 1, 'Movement', it reaches for the totality of the road's experience of moving through broader landscapes and contexts, using different modes through time: whether following prehistoric lifestyles (in the

chapter

' Changing Pastures'), or being driven by commerce and guided by the street geography of ancient Rome in the surviving fragments of a second-century carved-in-stone A-Z in ' Navigating the Urban Via Tiburtina' . Another chapter entitled

' Ways of Experience' addresses such diverse topics as the early medieval geography of religion and pilgrimage, and the ways in which the multi-faceted needs and experiences of modern-day commuters, lorry and coach drivers, cafe owners and tourists are met.

Part 2 is focused on ' Spaces and Artefacts' , the things that the road connects and in some cases created, whether or not these are, as one chapter is entitled, ' Visible or Invisible' . This part of the book also zooms in on long-term change because places, like all artefacts, have life cycles. Throughout its history, the road has always gone past, but the places it connects have changed and adapted just as the people who lived there have changed. There is a contrast here with that sentimental old saw that you can never step in the same river twice; here the road remains the same and it is the ' river-bank' that changes, just as all human landscapes do, thus giving them their abiding interest. This book is too wise to think that anything material abides, however. The road has also changed. Indicative of the book's whole argument is its cover photo of the second-century road's stone paving, excavated but fenced-off as if seeking (but failing) to be divorced from life.

Part 3, ' Managing Cultural Heritage' , brings us therefore to current concerns, notably how society might manage or protect the chaotic complexity that has been laid out for us in this book. Symbolic of such concerns are the chapters that touch on the remarkable survival of the sanctuary of Hercules at Tivoli, which explore its life cycles through past centuries and look ahead to new uses as its extensive remains are disengaged from a seventeenth-century papal armaments factory and nineteenth-century paper mill. Another chapter explores such questions further via fragmentary excavated remains of the past which fit awkwardly into unregarded corners of suburban Rome. This book asks its readers to consider anew how past and present are constantly be reconciled.

Via Tiburtina was written to the tune of the Florence Convention and chimes fully with the European Landscape Convention's vision of landscape in terms of its social and economic benefits, aesthetics or design, and as an urban as well as rural, ordinary and degraded as well as special, phenomenon. It can, however, also be read as a commentary on the Faro Convention published in 2005. This Convention, on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, has a view of heritage as a dynamic process as well as the ' stuff' that we preserve, which is lived and owned by everyone—but in an ownership that carries responsibility towards other people's heritage. This perspective aligns perfectly with landscape's attributes as universal commons and common goods. ' Via Tiburtina' , a symbolic way as well as physical pathway, thus offers an exemplar of how the ideas and aspirations of Florence and Faro converge as all roads do on Rome.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2012.658673>