

Guest editorial: Legal geography: discussions across borders, scales and landscapes

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The interdisciplinary project of legal geography has a close affinity with this journal's focus upon, and concern with, the shaping influence of law upon places, landscapes and other geographical formations. Since its early days in the 1980s, legal geography has introduced multiple geographical concepts, methods and discussions to legal scholarship and legal practice, offering a spatial exploration of the law (Braverman *et al.*, 2014; Delaney, 2015; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2019; Bartel and Carter, 2021; Nicolini, 2022; Kymäläinen, 2024; Gillespie *et al.*, 2024). Even though planning, environmental and public international law appear to be more readily benefiting from a more careful awareness of the geographical setting in which law appears, legal geography now exists as an established, standalone legal and geographic sub-discipline, paving new paths for legal theory, which are subsequently re-introduced as spatial theoretical underpinnings in even more areas of law.

In this special issue, we highlight the breadth of what has become an established discipline in legal scholarship, offering some of the latest contributions to the field. The articles featured in this Special Issue originate from discussions at the Critical Legal Geography stream, at the Critical Legal Conference at Lund University 2024, offering timely perspectives and fresh insights. They contribute novel methodological and critical perspectives in legal geography, ranging from advancements in cinematic jurisprudence and emotion, covert activity in maritime trade, the entanglement of physical and legal geography in the Anthropocene, as well as the role of more-than-human actors in the physical and metaphorical landscape.

The articles represent different facets of legal geographies and attempt to extend the discipline and explore its limits. In Emma Patchett's article, *A cinematic jurisprudence of homemaking in His House* (2020), Patchett writes in the intersections between legal geography, migration law and cinematic jurisprudence. Analysing homemaking in the asylum process with Remi Weekes' horror film *His House* (2020), she engages with the messy, unsettled and confronting materiality of the conceptual space of the home. The concept of chronotope is used as an innovative lens to examine how the law shapes – and negates – spaces of inhabitation in the asylum process. The article reveals how the law “constructs the spacetime of the home in asylum and yet simultaneously negates the embodied chronotope of inhabitation, leaching through the walls and then being complicit in its own concealment” (Patchett, 2025).

In Dhiraj Nainani's contribution, *The unfree sea: a legal geography of the dark fleet*, Nainani explores the “dark fleet”, thousands of ageing oil tankers used to engage in the illegal trade in sanctioned oil, through a legal geographical lens. The article sets out to understand how the dark fleet not only “generates its own distinct spatial and legal effects upon the sea but also how these effects constantly interrupt the supposedly smooth architecture of the international law of the sea” (Nainani, 2025). To explore the oceanic trade in sanctioned oil and the laws that govern the oceans themselves, Nainani



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utilises a theoretical approach guided by the concepts of strangeness, otherness and inhumanity. He concludes that “the international law of the sea can be as strange, othering and inhuman as the dark fleet that seeks to irrupt and provoke its seemingly unbroken cartography and apparently comprehensive regime of governance” (Nainani, 2025).

In *Legal geography, estuarine landscapes and the Anthropocene*, Caroline Buffery examines the imprint left by law over time on three tidal estuaries in Great Britain. Inspired by landscape geography, Buffery develops a “sequent legal occupance approach” as a framework to historically analyse how legal interventions have influenced the formation of contemporary landscapes. The approach is used to “uncover the layering of legal practices and the dynamic interplay between legal and spatial processes” while emphasising historical dimensions (Buffery, 2025). In analysing the estuaries, Buffery illustrates how “the relationship between man and landscapes can be seen as evolution whose construction does not cease” (Buffery, 2025).

The landscape concept is also explored by Gustav Stenseke Arup in *A Legal Geography of Wolves in Swedish Landscapes: A Morphogenetic Approach*. Tracing the legal protection of wolves in Sweden through entangled legal and non-legal processes, Stenseke Arup pictures how law and legality emerge as an aspect of the landscapes in which they function. A morphogenetic approach is utilised to articulate a process-oriented and relational approach to law in its landscapes. In the article, Stenseke Arup, 2025 describes how interrelated climatological, socio-ecological and political processes contribute to shaping the form of legal protection of wolves. The wolves themselves appear as a vital agent contributing to shaping law through their entanglement with various human discourses.

The special issue, therefore, journeys from intimate, homely spaces, to the silver screen, and through British and Swedish landscapes, to the vastness of the oceans, offering a correlating breadth of diverging methods and theories by which scholars investigate law’s spatiality. The heterogeneity of perspectives accommodated within contemporary legal geography is perhaps a healthy sign for a young yet rapidly maturing discipline.

Happy reading!

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