

LANDSCAPE PHENOMENOLOGY

A trend in landscape research drawing on the achievements of philosophical phenomenology.

Phenomenology of landscape takes advantage of the denial of the Cartesian model of cognition, in which man is reduced to a non-corporeal cognitive mind, in favour of the assumption that man is physically immersed in the sensually experienced world, and thus inevitably engages in various relationships with it. Intellectual sources of landscape phenomenology are the theories of Martin Heidegger (the concept of residence) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (the concept of the body as a medium in the process of experiencing the world, relations between nature and culture, the role of subjectivity in the process of cognition). The determinants of landscape phenomenology are: multisensory landscape experience (and experience in movement), the theory of residence and participation in the landscape, processability of the landscape, memory and remembrance understood as factors constituting the landscape. From the phenomenological perspective, landscape is first and foremost a world experienced by man in various ways, and thus "filled" with meanings.

Phenomenology of landscape is a trend that is particularly popular in humanistic geography and disciplines using its achievements, such as landscape archaeology, cultural anthropology and environmental aesthetics. Researchers developing landscape phenomenology from different perspectives – Tim Ingold, Edward Casey, Christopher Tilley, Edward Relph, Haana Buczyńska-Garewicz and Arnold Berleant – stress that apart from understanding landscape in visual terms as a way of seeing, aesthetic or artistic representation of the world, landscape is first of all an object of experience in which it is no longer just an object that is looked at, but also a life space. According to the idea of landscape phenomenology, man belongs to the landscape, which enables all experience: being in the world becomes being in the landscape (Wylie).

Representatives of landscape phenomenology indicate that landscape is not only a visual experience, but above all a multi-sensory one, and because of this one can talk about sound landscape, smell landscape, etc. The landscape is not only a visual experience, but also a multi-sensory one. A special role is played by tactical experience as a haptic and kinesthetic experience (Rodaway): tactility means the feeling of being in the world, while hapticism allows the body to be situated in space, while kinesthesia is the experience of the body in motion, which determines the unity of man and the environment.

Participation is the second of the factors important for the phenomenology of landscape that define an experience open to multisensoryity. Tilley and Berleant use the term "participatory landscape" and Ingold use the term "given landscape". Landscape here means the environment or surroundings in which people live, in which they are engaged and which they occupy. Man and the environment cannot be treated as separate entities, because they condition each other in one existential experience. Dialectical dependence awakens in people a sense of belonging, rootedness, intimacy, which is not only born from knowledge, but above all from interest. The landscape has an ontological meaning here, because it is in and through it that life takes place. Landscape here becomes a holistic experience through the body and full of sensual involvement (which includes topography, smells, sounds, movement), emotional feeling of mood and

subconsciously perceived stimuli.

The concept of inhabited place and surroundings, rooted in Heidegger's concept of inhabitation, connected with the "topographical" model of thinking, which combines place, practice, cosmology and nature (Tilly), remains significant in the phenomenology of landscape. The place is a centre of action for the phenomenology of landscape, where, as Relph writes, the experience of all the significant events of our lives, which are important only where they take place, is concentrated. Tilly uses the term "locality" to convey the specific senses and meanings that have been inscribed in the landscape by its users. Casey says that to be human means to be in a place, and to live means to live locally. In a participatory attitude towards the environment, we do not build a distance, which becomes the participation of an observer, a tourist or a passer-by, but a sense of closeness and intimacy. Understanding is achieved through inhabitation.

The third factor highlighted by landscape phenomenologists is the kind of practicing landscape through movement: this bodily experience that takes shape on the road. Walking is a combination of places and times, and walking creates spatial stories (de Certeau) "woven" of roads and paths. Following a path is a cultural act: we follow in the footsteps of others, while a few set new paths. Movement engages in experience a time factor that distinguishes the static concept of landscape as a view (built according to the principle of perspective, from a specific point of view, limited by the horizon) from landscape as a process (by moving we change our position, change our points of view, experience all senses, on many levels and from many perspectives). Landscape understood as a process ceases to be assessed in terms of aesthetics (as a view), and begins to be perceived in terms of functionality as a space for life, everyday work and experience (Ingold). According to Ingold, such an understanding of the landscape becomes a space of community actions that shape it.

The fourth factor is the memory of experiences experienced in a given landscape (place). Landscape appears here as a record of what was experienced, and the memory of the events that took place in it, a code by means of which we read and interpret it. Landscape is not a background for human activities, but a cognitive entity, evoking associations and memories. Some researchers find in landscape phenomenology the key to grasping the spiritual tone of human existence in the world. For David Abram, a phenomenological approach leads to the discovery of a more "authentic", ecological and holistic relationship between man and the earth.

Phenomenology of landscape is criticised primarily for its anthropocentrism, since the human body becomes here the source of all experience. The project, which was supposed to limit the Cartesian dualism of the subject and the object, emphasises it even more, stresses the subjectivity of experience and makes man the measure of all things (Foucault). The second critical moment is related to the granting of extraordinary powers to man, because according to this concept it is man who ultimately synthesizes all experiences. Another is related to the emphasis on individual experience: in many analyses of Tuan, Relph or Seamon, individual experience is identified with the "essence" of the landscape. Feminist and Marxist criticism indicates a lack of interest on the part of phenomenologists in social diversity of people. According to these critics, gender, age or anthropological factors (and the economic, political, social and power relations they involve) do not remain transparent and reflect in our experiences, as do the emphasis on pre-modern

lifestyles or non-European lifestyles as values, the search for "authentic landscapes" and an ideal, but in reality non-existent community that lives in harmony.

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