

MEMORY OF LANDSCAPE

Interpretative approach to landscape from the perspective of the processes of memory and oblivion, taking place in cultural and social reality, but leaving a symbolic or material (physical, topographic) trace in the cultural landscape.

Landscape memory is not the same as the memorial sites as introduced by Nora, nor is it identical with institutionalised historical memory expressed in "inscriptions" such as historical buildings, monuments, memorial plaques, etc. It is the effect of distinguishing what is historical (materially, chronologically, officially) from memory (living, spontaneous, discontinuous), open to dialectics of memory and oblivion. It concerns people, things, places and events that were more or less important at the time, but nowadays are no longer a space of experience. Although the knowledge about them is limited, they have left a trace in the socio-cultural reality, affecting the landscape shaped by humans (in the form of a marked road, planted tree, foundations of a house, a crossroads cross, etc.). Memory understood in this way has a limited temporal use-by date, which is the result of successive generations and a gradual narrowing down of what the community remembers from the furthest past (Halbwachs). Events, people, things and even ritual practices can be forgotten. The memory of the landscape is a-historical, it escapes chronology and continuity of narration, it expresses itself in what is non-verbal, conveyed in an unconscious and usually silent way. Landscape memory is manifested through natural processes that encompass people's past and their everyday affairs, things and events that, not being of a breakthrough historical significance, have not entered the historical order, subject to natural time. Landscape memory is expressed in the cultural landscape, in which the forgotten is accumulated in the form of a symbolic or material palimpsest. From this perspective, the landscape becomes a reservoir of past life and a medium of remembrance: it is the embedding of what humanity has abandoned or forgotten. This applies to works and activities developed individually or communally. As such, the landscape resembles a storage memory (Assmann), gathering inactive content (the forgotten, displaced, excluded), for which the dialectical opposite is the living, current functional memory. Storage memory includes what has been accumulated and forgotten in a certain period of time, but which can be resurrected by the functional memory that gives it renewed validity. This moment can be source research that restores the memory of something or someone (e.g. genealogical research), a breakthrough archaeological discovery (e.g. Biskupin), restoration of old customs and rituals (e.g. St. John's Night). They can also be "mnemonic tools", such as commemorative rituals to which Connerton refers, a set of traditions and ritual practices that have absorbed some of the community's memories, inactive for centuries, but kept in the form of stories, transformed into legends and parables. Ritual gestures contain a "reminder" which, in a performative form, as an embodied ritual, permeates into rituals, holy days, established practices that unite generations. From the perspective of landscape memory, it is worth noting that Connerton introduced a kind of memory defined by him as

locus. It is the memory of people living in a given place and experiencing it "internally", which means that it has an "embodied" character, is connected with a form of communing with what time has retained and left in memory. Its medium are the body, habits and gestures. It is a memory that has found refuge in customs, in the skills passed to others by unwritten traditions, in the collection of inner self-awareness, in natural reflexes and deep-rooted memories that do not belong to the individual, but to the community. The memory of gestures and rituals is an activity that co-shapes the cultural landscape. The materiality of landscape memory is expressed by traces, open and secret, which, intercepted by nature, begin to be subject to natural processes (a house falls into ruin, a fortified settlement becomes a topographical form, etc.). All that remains is a trace of them in the landscape: "discreet memory image". (Assmann), referring directly to a landscape in which the forgotten manifests itself in a more or less legible way. The landscape is full of traces of previous generations which, if not updated, become illegible. Humans have the ability to recognise and read them: without this, the landscape remains "silent", and its perception is not able to reach the source, condemning it to being just an aesthetic surface. It is a kind of non-memory that affects places, people, events, but it settles in the landscape, making the landscape itself a medium of memory: it is the landscape that stores the "memory" in the form of traces of old human activity. Such are, among others, landscapes rich in archaeological sediments, which are not covered by cultural memory or individual memory. Landscape memory is a kind of memory that is not based on memories, it is difficult to find its location in the collective memory, and yet it can take on a narrative form. This is possible thanks to the non-objective memory, which is expressed by traces legible in topography, ruins and even vegetation, i.e. those elements which have already lost their connection with human activity, although it is the source and cause of it. The non-human memory of the landscape is expressed in its geographical and symbolic topography, terrain and cultural and symbolic representations connected with given spaces.

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