

SENSORY LANDSCAPE

A type of landscape affecting the senses through visual, auditory, olfactory, haptic and taste stimuli without establishing a hierarchy of the senses and in a way that offers a poly-sensory experience of the surrounding environment.

The sensory landscape refers to the notion of *aisthesis* as a sphere of sensory experience, which is a source for aesthetics. Within the sensory landscape one can indicate: visual landscape, sound landscape (*soundscape*), *smellscape*. Tactile sensations that engage the body in motion are also important for the sensory landscape. The sensory landscape is perfectly reconstructed by the sensory gardens, aimed at activating all senses.

Traditionally, the landscape experience has a visual character and is part of the oculo-centrism encoded in the European culture, which gives the eye a privileged position among other senses. Aesthetics and philosophy have strongly embedded in tradition the notion of the superiority of sight, reducing the role of other stimuli in the perception and evaluation of the surrounding world. The hierarchy of the senses, cultivated since antiquity, emphasising the role of visual perception of beauty and giving preference to that what is visual, has led to the discrediting of the senses considered lower and responsible for mere sensual pleasure. Higher-value "theoretical senses" (higher) – eyesight and hearing – were linked to the sphere of artistic impressions, while the remaining "practical senses" (lower) – smell, taste and touch – with materiality and its sensual properties (Plato, Kant, Hegel). Nowadays, moving away from the privileged status of sight as a source of cognition that only gives a picture and a view of the surface, the role of the other senses in relation to the outside world has been recognised. According to Berleant, it is no longer possible to maintain the distinction between the lower and higher senses, because it destroys the aesthetic perception of an environment in which not sight, but other forms of experience play a paramount role, even if the stimuli are perceived subconsciously. The demolition of the old hierarchy of senses makes it possible to discover new qualities of the landscape, because apart from the visual landscape, other types of landscape, previously effectively depreciated: aural, olfactory, tactile, equally strongly influencing its overall perception, are revealed. Individual sensory landscapes, even if interpreted in isolation, do not exist in separation from each other - they overlap, amplifying the stimuli. Eyesight cooperates with that which is tactile, touch with taste, taste with smell.

The new arrangement of the senses has allowed their "spatialisation" and recognition that the senses organise space through smells, sounds, views and haptic sensations, while each of the senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell - contributes to a direct understanding of the place and helps to orientate oneself in space. In this context, Tuan distinguishes between close and distant senses: those that allow for a direct response to certain emotional and physical stimuli, and those that keep a distance.

The spatialisation of the senses reshapes their hierarchy, giving primacy to the activating contact senses, converting time-space relationships: from immediate taste sensations to a

long lasting audio experience, from distanced vision to the carnality of touch. Tuan emphasises the tactile quality of the senses: hearing and sight make the world accessible, touch and smell testify to its reality. Eyesight does not play a dominant role in this respect. It is helpful because it allows one to assess the situation, but is not able to capture the entire sensual quality of the landscape: the polyphony of sounds, smells and tastes.

Tuan's proposal, which links closeness to materiality and distance to visibility, shows the close relationship between the landscape and the place as such: only being in a specific place allows one to experience the landscape. The "materiality of the place", attested by the close senses, gives a broader knowledge and a deeper possibility to feel the landscape experienced by the distant senses. A sensual presentation of the landscape requires a change in the attitude of the viewer, who transforms from a passive observer into an active participant. It is necessary to remove the distance, either through practical activities or through the poly-sensory experience of the real landscape. In experiencing the sensory landscape it is not possible to turn off individual senses: we admire the view (sense of sight) listening to the singing of birds (sense of hearing), but first we had to reach the place (sense of touch, tactility), from which the best panorama stretches. It is impossible to turn off the sense of smell, but one can get used to certain smells; one cannot turn off the sense of hearing, but it is possible to get used to certain noises, as people in big cities know best. "Fresh air" as an essential element of the natural environment is a frequent reason for escaping from the city, although it may also assume forms that are repulsive for some, such as farm smells.

The concept of *soundscape* was introduced into Canadian literature by the composer, musicologist and cultural critic, Murray Schafer, a pioneer of sound ecology, particularly interested in the phonosphere of the city and the growing noise in it, and the phonosphere of a virgin landscape, where one can still look for the lost balance between sound and silence. The sound landscape is the directness and instantaneousness of sound sensations, which can be perceived as pleasant or not in a subjective way, as opposed to an abstracted, objective composition of the view. For centuries, the loudest sounds that penetrated the environment were the sounds of nature, such as bird singing, storm sounds, wind noise. This means that the primeval space was acoustic, but today it has been transformed into a visual space, and the sounds of nature have been drowned out by human cacophony. This applies in particular to the sounds of the city.

Douglas Porteous was the first to write about the landscape of smells; Corbin referred to it indirectly in his work entitled "In the Grip of Revulsion". As Porteous claims, the landscape of smells is discontinuous, fragmented in space and episodic in time, but cannot be detached from other senses. Smells surround us, filling our immediate surroundings, encouraging us with pleasant aromas or causing us to withdraw through unpleasant odours. The smells inherent in nature are pleasant, in contrast to the "urban" smells: car exhaust fumes, industrial and chemical smell of liquids or body odours. Smell is one of the factors that allow to distinguish between urban and rural (natural) space, to distinguish between the organic

character of rural and natural smells, their intensity in the forest, from the civilisation, industrial odour generated by cars, factories. In this context, one of the aspects of modernity is the aromatisation of culture. The most pleasant natural fragrances (floral, forest, marine) become – by dint of the chemical industry – "cultural" fragrances as aromas of popular cleaning agents or air fresheners.

Rodaway took up the issue of the sensory landscape by developing the concept of sensory geography, understood as one of the areas of humanistic geography. Rodaway attempted to reconstruct tactility in three dimensions: tactile experience, haptic experience and kinaesthetic experience. Tactility is the most intimate sense, a model way of sensory experience ("to touch means to be touched"). Just as one can distinguish between seeing and looking, listening and hearing, one can distinguish between feeling and touching. We can say that when we are in a landscape, the landscape is in us. This reversibility highlights the corporeality of our being in the world, which, according to Merleau-Ponty, takes ontological precedence over the perception of things and the sensuality of our perception of the world. Losing tactility means losing the feeling of being in the world, immobilises us in anaesthesia and eliminates kinaesthetic possibilities. For haptics defines the ability to participate – passive (as being touched) or active (as touching) – in the landscape, including kinesthesia as an awareness of presence and movement in the perception of space and in the relation of the body to the place. In this sense, the haptic experience gives access to the living world and to the material world.

The aspect of carnality plays a more serious role when it comes to kinaesthetic experience, perception on the way, body-in-motion. Kinesthetic experience determines the kind of unity (of the body) with the environment, integration of the person and place, placement in the space with which the body is both a continuum and a medium mediating between the self and the environment. The tactile feeling itself is of passive nature, only when combined with movement, combined with topographic experience it transforms into active being-in-the-world. The body is the medium through which we experience and feel the world; the senses give proof of presence. From this perspective, the role of "guide" through the landscape is played by the kinaesthetic sense, which, by mediating between the body and the environment, activates the senses, leading to their synaesthesia in the face of the multitude of sensory landscapes.

[B. F.]

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