

Emotional Landscapes: The Construction of Reality in Conflict

In dealing with landscape anthropology at the theoretical and methodical levels, broad fields of communication (intercultural) are opened up. Not only can individual recollection and collective memory be observed in specific places, but also cultural structures whose interpretation is spatiotemporally fixed can be investigated. We perceive the process “culture” as a smooth historical continuum because recollections are an important part of it. Thus, our memory is the “most important sense organ” (Degen & Huber 1992: 58, my translation), because it fills the world which we perceive with meaning. Even so, science cannot deliver any valid theory of memory but only speculate on its mode of operation: “If a constellation of neurons were activated it would stimulate further constellations which could activate still more constellations” (Degen & Huber 1992: 58, my translation).

In this sense, memory is rather a site of construction which uses the “past of the future” (Degen & Huber 1992: 60), the present, to recapitulate on experience. Feelings are crucial and formative to the extent that they already fill every new incident with meaning and quality. This process of ascription and perception of meaning in social interaction on the basis of an “emotional insight” and the corresponding “emotional landscape” is closely associated with the concepts of landscape analysed in this work and renders what is individually experienced easier to grasp. In my opinion, this range of topics provides a meaningful extension of the notion of landscape in anthropology which can be broadened by the elements dealt with in the following section.