

LOUNELA, ANU, BERGLUND, EEVA AND KALLINEN TIMO (eds) (2019) *Dwelling in Political Landscapes. Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives*. Helsinki: SKS. Studia Fennica Anthropologica 4. 293 p. ISBN 978-951-858-087-7 (Print), ISBN 978-951-858-114-0 (PDF) ISBN 978-951-858-113-3 (EPUB)

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, landscape is ‘a portion of territory that can be viewed at one time from one place’ (Merriam-Webster n.d.). However, defining a landscape as a visible part of a scenery does not capture the experience of living in a landscape nor its social and political aspects. In *Dwelling in Political Landscapes*, based on Tim Ingold’s ideas, dwelling is defined as a process where humans and nonhumans are entangled in their daily surroundings. Humans live in landscapes, but landscapes are also produced by them, as stated by the editors Eeva Berglund, Anu Lounela and Timo Kallinen in the preface to the book. Non-visible elements, such as spirits and ancestors, identities, cultural practices and power relations, participate in dwelling in landscapes.

Dwelling in Political Landscapes is based on a presentation from the Biennial Conference of the Finnish Anthropological Society “Landscapes, Sociality and Materiality”, held in Helsinki in 2015. The book consists of 13 articles which deal with different aspects of the politics of landscapes, and includes the Edward Westermarck Memorial Lecture by Philippe Descola. The topics of the articles vary from artificial landscapes created in the name of environmental protection to conflicts regarding land use, all based on ethnographic fieldwork in various places around the world.

Even though landscapes can be considered as sceneries seen from one place, they are affected by distant processes, such as global capitalism and climate change. Global processes

can also take the form of environmentalism and green energy projects, which change local landscapes and power relations. This is highly topical. In order to solve global challenges, the local consequences of global changes and their complexities must be understood at all levels of decision-making. I cannot avoid thinking about the ecology and politics of southern Indian coffee plantations, which are human-made, but ecologically rich environments affected by global and local economies (Robbins et al. 2021).

In *Dwelling in Political Landscapes*, the article by Anna Tsing combines various levels of the past and the present. Tsing describes a rewilding project, where deer populated an abandoned mine. The article is a wonderful piece of ethnographic writing. It brings together the long history of distant consequences of global and local processes, such as changing agricultural practices, the development of the clothing industry and brown coal mining, from the prehistoric era to the present day. The deer’s paradise described is a new and somehow artificial environment, which invites the reader to contemplate the actual meaning of nature.

Ideologies and worldviews are a part of the process, whereby landscapes are given their meaning. Worldviews often conflict. Relationships with nature are complex even inside communities. Remote places are sources of energy, both fossil fuels (as in Morgan Moffitt’s article about the circumpolar communities) and green electricity (as in Francesco Zanotelli and Christiano Talle’s article about wind power

struggles along the coastline of Mexico), but at the same time they are the homelands of locals. On the other hand, the views of the local people living in environmentally rich circumstances often differ from the environmentalist's point of view. For instance, in Joonas Plaan's article, the fishermen along the coastline of Kihnu, Estonia, try to cope with the regulation of natural resources such as fish. Jenni Mölkänen describes in her article a situation where the local people in Madagascar start to consider whether they have truly known their traditional living environment when ecotourists come with their own ideas and preferences.

Social structures such as nation-states are also constructed by means of landscapes created or reappraised for that purpose. For instance, Tiina Järvi's article in this book describes the erasing of Palestinian dwellings in order to construct a national Israeli landscape. Otherwise, there is very little discussion about the meaning of landscapes in the context of nationalism, even though Nationalist and National Romantic ideas of nature and landscape have played an essential role in nationalist ideologies, especially in northern Europe (e.g. Lekan 2004). I understand that the articles in *Dwelling in Political Landscapes* mainly consider the landscapes from a local/indigenous point of view. However, Nationalist and National Romantic ideas of landscape never ceased to exist, and are certainly included in the global ideological systems which also form the politics of landscapes at the local level. The theoretical standpoints referenced in *Dwelling in Political Landscapes* are mostly from the Anglophone world, which might explain the lack of interest

in the role of National Romanticism in the construction of national landscapes. However, some references to, for instance, German or Nordic studies would not have weakened the book. (My personal favourite is *Det norske landskapet* [*The Norwegian Landscape*], by ethnologist Arne Lien Christensen (2002). Of course, it is accessible only to those with skills in Scandinavian languages.)

I would also like to comment on the definition of modernity in the book. According to several articles, landscape used to be something, and, then, came modernity with its challenges, and everything changed. But what is modernity? Obviously, the authors link it to the rise of global capitalism and environmental crises, but there could be other explanations, too. For instance, the Romantic ideology permanently changed the way we conceptualise the landscape (e.g. Christiansen 2002). Some kind of premodern thinking about nature still exists, for example, in the rural areas, even though they are heavily influenced by capitalist structures.

Despite several complaints, *Dwelling in the Political Landscapes* is definitely one of the most important books I have recently read. It is a thought-provoking, multidimensional and insightful collection of perspectives on lived environments. It is a book I recommend to anthropologists and also to environmentalists and politicians involved in land-use struggles.

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