

Representation, process, experience: (post)industrial landscape in anthropological-geographical perspective

Abstract

The main topic of the dissertation is the (post)industrial landscape of what is today the Czech Republic. In particular, the dissertation presents three case studies of three (post)industrial landscapes: that of Ostrava, Kladno and Most. The aim of the dissertation is twofold – thematic as well as theoretical. As far as the thematic focus of the dissertation goes, the author employs the concept of landscape as a prism through which it is possible to explore large societal shifts and changes as they are mirrored in landscape. The question is what has happened to industrial landscape after the fall of socialism and how industrial landscape has turned into what it is now. On the theoretical level, the (post)industrial landscape of contemporary Czechia is used as a means of exploring the complexity of the concept of landscape and developing a conceptualization of landscape that comes to terms with its complexity, ambiguity and elusiveness.

In terms of theory, the dissertation engages with three ways of conceptualising landscape prevalent in contemporary anthropology and (new cultural) geography: landscape as representation, process and experience. To explore them in depth and reveal any connection and interlinks these conceptualisations might share, the author explores the three (post)industrial landscapes of Ostrava, Kladno and Most, each from different theoretical-methodological standpoints: visual discourse analysis to analyse visual representations of Ostrava, hermeneutic content analysis to explore Kladno and finally phenomenological field research to research Most. In terms of methodology, the dissertation thus uses mixed method, bricolage inspired approach in order to surpass the epistemological challenge posed by the difficulty to conceptualise landscape as representation, process and experience at the same time. Deep situated knowledge and the commonalities among the landscapes allow the author to combine the insights in order to provide a rich account of features and elements of contemporary (post)industrial landscape as well as the forces, processes and tensions out of which it emerges. Drawing on Burawoy's extended case method, the author understands the three landscapes as particular cases from where it is possible to develop a complex understanding of contemporary (post)industrial landscape and by means of building on pre-existing theory to elaborate more nuanced conceptualization of landscape in general.

Landscape because of its complexity on both the theoretical and thematic levels allow for creative and imaginative opening of themes and topics, alleys of explorations and directions in theorizations. The proposition to combine the different approaches forms the core theoretical contribution of the dissertation to debates on what landscape is as they unfold in contemporary anthropology and geography.