



Ewa Klekot

(University of Warsaw; Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology)

From the standpoint of anthropology, understood and practiced as I understand and practice it, that which is popularly referred to as “landscape” should be understood as a particular, culturally conditioned approach to the environment. The structure of the word (in Polish literally *land-picture*) suggests that its origins lie in the practices of visual representation. The latter, in their turn, are rooted in specific social practices aimed at both the creation of representations as well as their use. The aestheticizing of the environment in the ascendancy of vision to the form of *landscape* shares much in common with the Heideggerian world view, and this kinship is corroborated by the eighteenth-century *landscape park*, whose existence is founded on subjecting the environment to aesthetic rigour. The relation between the aestheticizing and the aestheticized is unequal, permitting the former to assume the privileged position of an uninvolved—and most often static—observer who looks on without any risk or liability (cf. Brett 1996, 38-51).

The eighteenth-century aesthetic categories of the picturesque and the sublime continue to influence the valuation of representations of the environment as a landscape (mainly photography today), having learned the lesson in abstractionism and new objectivity in the meantime as well as undergoing inevitable terminological revisions. Given the cultural habiliments of a contemporary author of visual representation, *landscape* does not only mean a distanced viewing (Alberti’s window) but also taking a look with a motionless eye (a single eye, obviously, given the structure of the perspective, then the lens of the camera obscura and the photographic camera). One watches a *landscape* as it hangs immobile on the wall or extends into a panorama seen from a vantage point that all guides recommend.

The intellectuals of the eighteenth century were convinced that “only when the mind is set at rest, no longer jolted and jarred by the physical displacements of its bodily housing, can it operate properly. As long as it is in between one point of observation and another, it is effectively disabled” (Ingold 2004, 321-322). The modern mind, implementing the Cartesian method of attaining certain knowledge, operates best when the body remains still, for only then can it indulge in the illusion (“Cartesian error”) of not being a part of that body. The modern, Western concept of true knowledge and the means of achieving it is thus founded on the practice of modern, laboratory-based science, which is undisturbed by the motion

of the observer, and on the modern mode of travelling, which consist in transporting an immobile, seated passenger. Much the same applies to the contemplation of beautiful sights during the journey of a tourist. The reduction of the environment to *landscape* prompted new ways for it to be exploited, such as building parks where the environment was to be *viewed*: both landscape parks (in both meanings of the word) and national parks, as well as associated practices subsumed under the term of tourism.

Anthropology based on participation in reality as a prerequisite of cognition (as envisaged by either Tim Ingold, Chris Tilley, Kirsten Hastrup, or Michael Jackson, to name the most eminent representatives) presupposes that cognition is possible only by being situated *within* the environment. At the same time, this anthropological practice must presume a necessary “split consciousness”, resulting from Husserlian determination of divergence between the world and our cognition of the world. This is because anthropology is “aware of the existence of a world of ethnographic detail and practical, embodied life on the one hand, and conscious of the preconditions of knowledge on the other” (Hastrup 2005, 137). Consequently, anthropology thus construed emphasizes practices seeking to *establish one within the environment* (Ingold 2000; Hastrup 2015), and so also those which modernity developed as *establishing one within a landscape*. Above all, these include the modern practices of walking (compare e.g. Ingold 2004; Ingold and Lee 2006; Klekot 2014; Österlund-Pötzsch 2010), which by no means challenge the modern understanding of the environment as a *landscape* but serve to forge a relationship based on structures of experience which differ from those underlying *landscape reduction*, in other words surveying views by an immobile, distanced, safe and blameless observer.

Sciences concerned with the environment do employ the term *landscape* as they function within the contemporary discourse concerning nature. However, in practice the term is often assumed to mean a set of visually available diagnostic data, which is supplemented by information obtained by means of other analyses (biochemical, physicochemical, mechanical, statistical etc.) Beginning with the proposition that *landscape* is a uniquely modern way of understanding environment (which not infrequently means its reduction), I believe that studies of landscape should be the domain of the humanities and social sciences, as well as scientific studies as Latour saw them. Yet it is crucial that they are dialogically coupled with studies of environment, *inter alia* because the concept of “protecting nature” against “culture” is intellectually out of date and socially indefensible. There is a need for a new concept of environmental care and protection, preferably unencumbered by contemporary dichotomies, or at least one which is aware of the limitations these dichotomies give rise to. Today, the empathy potential requires a different framework than an imperialist nostalgia for modernity, one which strives to preserve (indigenous populations, trees, animals, stones) by fencing them off in reserves. So,

education should aim to instil an understanding of landscape in which it becomes a function of the environment while its valuation relies on ecological knowledge and the experience of participation rather than on aesthetic quality.

Bibliography:

- Brett, David. 1996. *The Construction of Heritage*. Cork: Cork University Press.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 2005. "Social Anthropology. Towards a Pragmatic Enlightenment?" *Social Anthropology* 13(2): 133-149.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 2015. "The Poetics of Place: the Timeless Topography of Thule." In: *Colloquia Anthropologica*, edited by Michał Buchowski, 19-38. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje.
- Ingold, Tim. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2004. "Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived through the Feet." *Journal of Material Culture* 9(3): 315-340.
- Ingold, Tim, Jo, Lee. 2006. "Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Rooting, Socializing." In *Locating the Field. Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, edited by Simon Coleman & Peter Collins, 67-85. Oxford: Berg.
- Klekot, Ewa. 2014. "Walking in National Park of Fruška Gora." *Ethnologia Fennica* 41: 23-37.
- Österlund-Pötzsch, Susanne. 2010. "Pedestrian Art: The Tourist Gait as Tactic and Performance." *Ethnologia Europaea* 40(2): 14-28.