Geophilosophy: a new approach to the study of nature and landscape

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Abstract
Geophilosophy is a philosophical approach that belongs to the domain of environmental aesthetics and deals with the study of the contemporary issues of place and space, by conducting a genealogical analysis of terms such as landscape, milieu and territory. The term was firstly introduced by G. Deleuze, and it is related to the concepts of rhizome, territorialization and deterritorialization.

I argue that the contemporary and globalized configuration of places can be characterized as a collection of rhizomatic and mutually defined landscapes. The idea of rhizome, in fact, can be used to denote a global network of ‘processual’ landscapes and it is significant in order to clarify the issue of the identity of place, and the characterization of the latter as something not static, and which cannot be merely reconstructed through the concepts of heimat and genius loci.

Furthermore, my approach is aimed at widening the aesthetic analysis of space and place towards the ecological approach to perception, by using in this context the concept of “affordance”, introduced by the psychologist J. Gibson to describe the possibilities that environment can offer to the perceiver and to the human being who lives in a place. This theoretical step enables the development of an interdisciplinary thought which integrates ecology, aesthetics and psychology, and analyzes the relationship and the interaction between the observer and the glocal (local plus global) landscape, in a way compatible with both realist and constructivist/post-modern theoretical approaches.

1. Geophilosophical approach and postmodernism

What is usually called “spatial turn” and it is referred to the interdisciplinary interest in place and space in the social science in the last twenty/thirty years can be considered, among the others causes, as a product of the postmodern innovation in epistemology. I would like to point out that the philosophical assumptions enabling what I call ‘philosophical thought on/of place’ were developed,
in the postmodern philosophy, by Jean François Lyotard, among the others, who questioned the universal, homogenizing, and globalized terms of the entire Western thought. The Postmodern condition, in fact, comes into the lexicon as a deconstruction and a crisis of the narratives. A specific attention to difference and diversity, and to discourses, as well, derived from it: geophilosophy itself can be considered as a postmodern discourse, which depends on a specific context, and which studies place, landscape and space as products of singular practices. Despite the various criticisms directed to the concept of ‘postmodernism’ (sometimes justified), I suggest that postmodern thought contributed to the deconstruction of the official philosophical grammar, and of concepts such as progress, identity and reason, considered as natural, and universally valid and effectual. Furthermore, postmodernism can be considered as a deconstruction of philosophical naturalism and of the universal categories of Western philosophy. Lyotard speaks, in fact, of big global metadiscourses, referring to some grand narratives, such as the dialectic of the spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the concept of rationality. These systems of knowledge come with a claim to universal validity at the expense of what is defined as discourses (narrative singular practices). Metanarrative is a global and totalizing cultural schema, an expression of a universal and unifying paradigm. Metanarrative is an untold story that unifies and totalizes the world. In opposition to metanarratives, the postmodern era produces small and local narratives (petit récits), by focusing on specific contexts as well as on the diversity and multiplicity of experiences. Thanks to the postmodern concept of difference, the question of the identity of place can take its own ‘place’ on the philosophical shelf again. In fact, difference is surely one of the central concepts for geophilosophical theory too. For this reason I disagree with the interpretation of postmodernism as mere relativism, especially in relation to environmental aesthetics, as well as in sociological and anthropological studies about space and place: postmodernist studies, especially those related to cultural studies, convey a different perceptional schema, in which the local differences concerning places are globally connected. Geophilosophy can be therefore considered as a metadiscourse but, differently from other branches of cultural studies, it tries to conduct a interdisciplinary analysis of the concept of space, place and landscape. By establishing connections with architecture, geography, anthropology and sociology, it tries to underline the deep relationships we, as human beings, have with places.

1.1 Geophysics: against naturalism of concepts

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Geophilosophy is a XX century interdisciplinary philosophical line of research that develops a culturalistic approach which focuses on the study of the contemporary issues of place and space, by conducting a genealogical analysis of terms such as landscape, milieu and territory. The term ‘geophilosophy’ was firstly introduced by the French philosopher G. Deleuze with the aim of reorienting the philosophical thought from concentrating on temporality and historicity towards focusing on spatiality and geography. Deleuze argued that thinking (in the philosophical sense, as he quotes Kant and Husserls in the first lines of his essay) takes place in the relation between Earth and territory. Furthermore, he adds that a concept is not an object, but a territory; in fact, about philosophy, he says: “Philosophy is reterritorialized on the concept. The concept is not object but territory. It does not have an object but a territory. For that very reason it has a past form, a present form and, perhaps, a form to come”. He was also the first to introduce terms such as deterritorialization and territorialisation, which are used nowadays in environmental aesthetics. According to Deleuze territorialisation and deterritorialization are two movements belonging to the Earth and involved in the creation of ideas. Indeed, he identifies a deep theoretical connection between Ancient Greek philosophy and the poleis, as well as between Modern Age philosophy and Modern State.

Coherently with this line of thought, I state that there is an important relation between philosophical concepts and the places from which these thoughts grow and pour out of. Thus, discussing about space, place and landscape is neither a trivial matter, nor merely a realistic issue: they are not natural terms but, rather, they have a cultural meaning in relation with a specific historical period (or a period belonging to the history of ideas). This project starts from a deep theoretical and conceptual genealogy of term such as nature, landscape, space, and place. I consider them not merely as objective and universally valid terms, but as relative to the culture and identity that uses them. This idea entails a precise critique of reductionism and naturalism in the methodology of social science: there are no universal, natural, and unmediated notions of space and place.

2. The genealogy of terms such as nature, place, space and landscape; the notion of landscape.

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3 Ivi, p. 101.
I assert that there is a cultural factor in the theory of space, place and landscape that, from the scientific point of view, is as relevant as their extrinsic physical qualifications (this does not necessarily imply a mere relation of determination, neither a temporal priority). Space is, indeed, a symbolic form belonging to a specific culture: for this reason, I advocate the thesis according to which we cannot recur to a univocal, physical and naturalized conception of space. Erwin Panofsky, for example, while speaking about the invention of Perspective in the Renaissance, sustains the non-universality and non-realism of the concept of space; he argues that the Modern system of space representation involves a specific approach of the Modern subject, in perceiving and representing the environment. The Modern subject, with “his single and immobile eye”, develops an actual subjective optical vision both in terms of artistic representation and determination of the space around him as “infinite and unchanging and homogeneous space”. I sustain a preeminence of the concept of place in the Ancient societies (considered as Greek, Latin, Western and Eastern societies), considering it as something that involves a symbolic, religious and mythical relationship between the historical man and the environment. Contemporary philosophers and anthropologists, e.g. Edward Casey among the others, argue that, since the Enlightenment brought the dominance of western science, “space” has been taken as self-evidently prior to place. Space has been considered the general abstract featureless condition in which the culture can occur, while place is just a local particular. On the contrary Casey, along with many other writers (e.g. Tim Ingold and Jeff Malpas), specifies that place comes first and that space is a product of a specific philosophical thought of the Moderns. In the case of modern thinkers, from Descartes to Leibniz, Casey speaks about a “disdain” for the specialness of place and of genius loci. According to the American phenomenologist, Western philosophers and scientists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assume that places are merely momentary subdivisions of a universal space quantitatively determined in its neutral homogeneity.

Thus during the history of representation of the world and the history of image, a transition from a transcendent representation (where the subject does not determine what surrounds himself, but he is a part of a cosmological order) to a transcendental presentation occurs: when the Cartesian subject, considered as res cogitans and ens separated and detached from the world, enters into relation with space and time through abstract, intellectual, and rational categories. This opposition underlies a crucial metaphysical theme in the heideggerian terminology: for Heidegger, in fact, the

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6 Ivi, p. 29.
technical and Cartesian space of Modern Age is related to globalization and to a specific kind of subjectivity; on the contrary the Ancient Greek man dwells in the fourfold (the *Geviert*), the metaphysical and ontological bound between earth, sky, divine and mortals and, consequently, he lives an harmonious relationship with the environment, by feeling and forming a part of the Cosmos.\(^{10}\)

From this standpoint I also bring forward the thesis that the distinction between a relational and historical place versus an anonymous, homologated and globalized space lies also at the bottom of Marc Augé’s\(^{11}\) thought. In fact the French anthropologist draws a sharp-cut division between places and non-places, as airports, railways, shopping malls, considered as globalized areas towards which the subject cannot develop any emotional and identitarian feeling. The same distinction can be read in Creswell\(^ {12}\), in his book dedicated to Yu Fu Tuan, and in many other scholars for whom place is a ‘meaningful location’, and space is a more abstract concept. Space is usually considered as the outer-space or the space of geometry. On the contrary place is taken to mean history, identity\(^ {13}\) and relationship.

### 2.1 The notion of landscape: connection between aesthetics and ecology

Augustine Berque\(^ {14}\), in comparing Western and Chinese landscape, affirms that some societies were not landscape-aware. Berque, quoting the famous assertion by Cézanne that the peasants of Provence had never “seen” (from an esthetical and artistic point of view) the Montaigne Sainte Victoire, argues that many societies have worked with the environment, but never wondered about landscape. For many authors, landscape has been invented by city-dwellers and artists during the Modern Age, while the civilization of Ancient Greece did not have in its language a world for landscape. An aesthetic conception of landscape emerged both in China, about two thousand years ago, and in Europe during the XV century, within the Flemish art.

I think that the concept of landscape deserves to be considered apart from the other concepts. Especially in the last century a lot of interdisciplinary landscape studies have been produced, considering “landscape” as the visible shape of a place, or in some cases as a substitute of the place itself, abandoning the idea of the landscape as something merely aesthetical, such as a view, or a

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I propose to consider the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) as the result of the overcoming of the previous approach to the study of landscape; this document constitutes an attempt at considering landscape as deeply important in creating the identity of a culture. As the Preamble of the Convention says: “the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality”. The European Landscape convention is furthermore determinant for a new concept of landscape as a place (the landscape is considered as the visible shape of the place, any kind of place), and as something belonging to the people and chosen by them: landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors; consequently, speaking about landscape means speaking about the identity and the political guidelines of a community. Hence a new meaning of landscape emerges as the relation between people and land or territory. This relation concerns the perceptive schema, the symbolic, memorial and historical heritage, all things that make a landscape a ‘milieu’ or a context of life. In the Convention “landscape” is considered as our living context, natural and inherited, where people preserve identity, diversity and the sense of community.

3. Processual landscape and the connection with ecological psychology by J. Gibson

One of the aims of my approach and current research is to relate the question of landscape to the ecological issue. As a geophilosopher I believe in the necessity of interdisciplinary. In addition I think that the conceptualization of landscape, space and place in the history of ecology and in the ecological studies, is a crucial complement to the history of this concepts in the humanities. There are, in fact, some interesting ideas about the connection between cultural landscape and ecology (Nassauer 2007)\(^\text{15}\), and for this reason I connect the ecology of perception with the cultural theory of landscape, conceiving the landscape as the product of the interaction between culture and the affordances (a notion elaborated by J. Gibson\(^\text{16}\)) of a place. This relationship is neither a matter of realism, nor a mere conceptual determination; on the contrary landscape is considered as in evolution, a processual interaction between the environment (and the complexity of the affordances and invariants) and the perceiver (a body in moving) in the place, who, through his nature and culture, creates a relationship with the environment. I call this relation “processual landscape” (fig 1). It is firstly necessary to reconsider the idea of environment: without this term, in fact, we would


miss an important step in analyzing landscape and space. The concept of environment is often criticized for being used in a reductionist and realist way, to describe the physico-biological (objective) elements of nature. Yet the environment belongs also to landscape, and has a role in defining the latter, especially if we assume an ecological perspective. Hence, I suggest using the bridge concept of affordance to connect the cultural study on landscape to the biological and ecological ones, thus connecting also epistemology and ontology, as well as the postmodernist and the realist perspectives. Landscape, space and place are not only inhabited and built in a cultural sense, but they are also perceived. Even though the issue of place is often considered only as cultural, concerning humanities or, at most, human geography, I argue that, the study of landscape, space and place should comprehend also the **ecology of perception**.

This expression was introduced in 1979 by J. Gibson as an extension – and an overcoming, from a certain point of view - of the Gestalt psychology: Gibson explicitly points out his debt to Kurt Koffka. The ecology of perception is an approach to visual perception in which the latter is not reduced to the dynamic between stimulus and responses, but it consists in the relation between the affordances of the environment and the perceiver, in a deep interconnection in which the philosophical dichotomy between subject and object of the traditional cognitive science becomes obsolete. The central idea of Gibson's psychology is the necessity to move psychology out of the laboratories where it has been confined, to replace the investigation that proceeds through the use of stimuli that are often biased and artificial, and to characterize perception as a relation between organism and environment. This is the main methodological indication. In addition, Gibson specifies how there is not one vision only (only one perceptive resultant), there is not only the **aperture** vision, concerning the basic configuration of the object, as if we were looking at something through a hole in a fence, but in reality, vision concerns the free movement of the head (**ambient** vision) and the free movement of the body (**ambulatory** vision). Looking around and getting around do not fit into the standard idea of what visual perception is and, according to Gibson (and to the experiments he conducted on the optic ambient array rather than on fixed vision, or “snapshot vision”) the visual awareness is in fact panoramic and does persist during long acts of locomotion. The reason is that the perceiver finds himself in an ecosystem. This is the fundamental step, through which it is possible to exit the Cartesian world and enter the world of ecosystems, of organisms and, as a geophilosopher I can add, the world of places. An important reader of the work of Gibson, Tim Ingold, points out that “As the founder of ecological psychology, James Gibson, argued in his classic work on visual perception, the forms of the objects we see are specified by transformations in the pattern of reflected light reaching our eyes as we move about in their vicinity. We perceive, in short, not from a fixed point but along what Gibson calls a ‘path of observation’, a
continuous itinerary of movement [...] if perception is thus a function of movement, then what we perceive must, at least in part, depend on how we move. Locomotion, not cognition, must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, when discussing about his own perceptual theory and confronting it with Gibson’s, Ingold quotes Merleau Ponty. The idea of a perceiver embedded in the world is elaborated from a philosophical point of view in Merleau Ponty’s work, and then pursued by Gibson’s theory, in a psychological perspective. There are deep differences between the two frameworks, but they share a non-objectivist perspective on vision.\textsuperscript{18} In addressing the problem of perception in opposition to classical cognitivism and to classical empirism, Gibson develops a non-representational idea of cognition, (that does not need representation or computation), but that occurs directly\textsuperscript{19} through what he calls “direct pick up of information”, and that is embodied and integrated in the environment. In order to specify the moment of perception and to exemplify the epistemic relation between perceiver and medium, Gibson introduces the concept of \textit{affordance}. He describes what environment affords to animals: terrain, water, fire, objects, tools, and other animals. The crucial point is to understand how environment affords (give the possibility of) perception and action. The composition and the layout of surfaces constitute what they afford, and an affordance emerges only when different characteristics of individuals, such as their physical dimensions and abilities, social needs and personal intensions, are matched with the features of environment. According to a simplified interpretation of Gibson’s book, the affordance is usually considered as a property of the natural environment, offered to the animal and the human being in action. But two specifications are required: first of all, affordance is neither a property, not a-priori, nor a universal measure. It is something unique for every animal and it belongs to (and emerges within) the relationship between the environment and the perceiver\textsuperscript{20}. Different layouts afford different behaviors for different animals and different mechanical encounters. The different substances of the environment have different affordances for nutrition and manufacture. The different objects of the environment have different affordances for manipulation. Also animals and human beings reciprocally afford a complex set of interactions. On the basis of this characterization of the concept of affordance we can assert that Gibson’s realism cannot be considered as a naïve one. On the other hand the

\textsuperscript{19} Gibson strongly argued against indirect perception. He claimed that organism directly perceives meaning from the environment and that this happens at the level of medium, surfaces, substances and events that are relevant to the organism’s lives and not at the level of dimension of physics. In the flow of perception the human perceiver directly picks up affordances.
\textsuperscript{20} See J. GIBSON, \textit{The Ecological Approach}, p. 127 e sgg.
affordance is neither subjective: affordances are properties of things considered with respect to an observer, and not properties of the experiences of the observer only. They are not subjective values; they are not feelings like pleasure or pain added to a neutral perception. There has been endless debate among philosophers and psychologists as to whether values are physical or phenomenal, in the world of matter or only in the world of mind. For affordances as distinguished from values, the debate does not apply. Affordances are neither in the one world or the other inasmuch as the theory of the two worlds is rejected. There is only one environment, although it contains many observers with limitless opportunities for them to live in it.21 In addition, the perceiver (a human being) is not a Cartesian subject (characterized in its contemporary version by the hardware/software dichotomy). Gibson, in fact, adds that natural vision depends on the eyes in the head on a body supported by the ground, the brain being only the central organ of a complete visual system. An affordance cuts across the subjective-objective dichotomy and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is a fact of the environment as much as a fact of the behavior; it is both psychical and physical.22 According to him it is also a mistake to separate the cultural environment from the natural one, as if there were a world of mental products distinct from the world of material products. At the end the issue of realism does not seems to be so relevant for the ecological psychology: there is only one world, however diverse, and all animals live in it. An holistic approach is therefore more appropriate, and the non-separation between nature and culture is an element emphasized by other scholars who supported similar idea on perception (e.g. Gregory Bateson, who cannot be defined a realist, or Tim Ingold who develops Bateson’s ideas and talks about ‘fluid space’ that seems to be similar to the concept of ‘fluid of perception’ provided by Gibson). A. Berque, another important landscape scholar, discussing affordances adds that they can be considered the landscape itself: “Nous dirons qu’elles sont dans le paysage, et même, qu’elles sont le paysage en tant que médiation. Des conceptions assez voisines, mais encore plus radicalement non-dualiste, se retrouvent dans l’approche de l’énaction qu’a formulée Francisco Varela. Celle-ci récuse l’idée positiviste selon la quelle nous percevrons un monde pré donnée ou préétabli, qui précédérait l’expérience du sujet de la perception. C’est la structure sensori-motrice du sujet lui-même, c’est-à-dire son corps à la fois percevant et agissant, qui guiderait sa perception dans le monde”.23

What I would like to point out in this context is the importance of the interaction between human beings and nature (and its manifestation as place, space and landscape). The crucial point is that there is neither an opposition nor a preeminence of one on the other, but rather the human being is characterized as embedded in the place, in nature and in the landscape. The affordances, thus, are

21 Ivi, p. 138.
22 Ivi, p. 130.
23 A. BERQUE, Les Raisons du Paysage, p. 27.
revealed as perceptional characteristics during the interaction between the environment and the perceiver. Therefore the concept of affordance can be used to create a bridge between geophilosophy, with its culturalistic approach, and the ecological thought.

What I would like to emphasize is that place needs to be considered as an autonomous entity (a processual entity) within which the human cultural beings are in a deep relationship. This statement allows us to overcome the idea of a mere aesthetical landscape, as well as the idea of a cultural landscape that can be simply determined by people. Affordance is a biological term that enables us to think about landscape as a complex system, that affords or not the relation with us.

Human beings and landscape (constituted by affordances) are in a mutual and dynamical relation. The perception of an affordance is not a process in which we perceive a value-free physical object to which a meaning is somehow added arbitrarily, but it is a process of perceiving a value-rich ecological object. At the same time, living in a place implies perceiving its affordance, constituted in the relationship between human beings and the environment. There is not an anonymous place out there, but an ecological system, in which the cultural element plays an important role. The idea that emerges from this view is what I call ‘processual landscape’.

4. The rhizome as a model to understand the contemporary globalized landscape and to overcome the dichotomy space/place.

Contemporary landscape is a very problematic issue: clearly one of the reasons is that it is globalized. As I showed elsewhere, a parallelism can be identified between the space-place difference and the opposition between place and non-place proposed by Marc Augé. Even though I consider it important to take into consideration the distinction between places and non-places in order to understand the aspects and the dynamics of contemporary globalization, I advocate that contemporary landscape can be better described by using the concept of rhizome and by defining it through a continual dialectic between deterritorialization and territorialisation acts. Deleuze introduces these terms in order to describe the processes of creation and dismantling of a territory, as two movements of a continuous dialectic characterizing the dwelling on the Earth. According to Deleuze ancient states and city states carry out a deterritorialization by adapting the territory to a geometrical extensiveness; the imperial spatium of the State and the political extension of the City are deterritorializing principles of an originally nomadic place, that once was connected with the Earth. But it is with capitalism and the despotic State that deterritorialization reaches its climax. For Deleuze modern societies are characterized by continuous processes of deterritorialization: but what they deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other. These neo-territorialities are
often artificial, residual, and archaic. Thus every territory in history is subject to both these activities. The concepts of deterritorialization and re-territorialization can be applied to the explanation of the dialectic between local and global landscape: local is something connected with place, whichever its extension, and with the creation of territory; global, on the other hand, is connected with deterritorialization. Nevertheless the issue is not so easy. I sustain that every culture entails local (earth as a place) and global (earth as a globe) actions. Every culture is characterized by both deterritorializing and reterritorializing movements. This kind of relation is never static, sedentary, but implies a continuous movement in connection to global fluxes. On the one hand it is true that globalization itself is a deterritorializing process because, as Deleuze points out, capitalism applies extensive measurements to the Earth that, on the contrary, requires also intensive and qualitative modalities of approach. On the other hand, globalization does not just erase the differences and the specific characteristics of places (I think we have to consider also the different historical phases of globalization, not just the last one, dominated by the capitalism of trades). Rather, globalized world means a continuous dialectic movement between local place and global space. The poles of this dialectic are not in radical opposition, but are complementary. Global becomes the relation and the connection between different places. According to Deleuze’s theory, in fact, territory is unpredictable in what concerns its shape (landscape) and the fluxes that pass through it: especially in the postmodern age there is neither temporal stability nor spatial fixity. We cannot simply and nostalgically speak about a place whose qualities are erased by globalization. On the contrary, the fluxes that cross a territory can now erase its qualities and configure a new and deeper kind of landscape. Whether this shape is in harmony with a place (considered as historical, symbolical) or not, depends on the complexity of elements that need to be analyzed. Hence, the crucial point is to understand which kinds of deterritorializations and re-territorializations, which kinds of places and spaces have emerged in the postmodern age. Non-places are surely a distinctive aspect of postmodern deterritorialization, yet I want to point out that the simple dichotomies between place/non-place and space/place as something contrastive are not enough to understand the contemporary landscape. Moreover, from the ethical point of view, I suggest, they are not enough in order to be able to deal with and take care of all kinds of landscapes in the world. I argue that when a space is marked as ‘non-place/junk space’ or a similar definition, an aesthetical and, consequently an ethical (meaning by this the action of taking care) judgment is implied. As I said above, landscape is everywhere, is global and local, with each landscape entailing a specific kind of relationship with the human beings. The task of the philosopher is to understand the relationship between people and contemporary landscape, and to encourage the development of educational practices aimed at dwelling in a landscape, and feeling that landscape.
4.1 A Rhizome of landscapes

The rhizome (from the ancient Greek rizo-, root) is a biological term that denotes the modification of the underground stem of a plant. If a rhizome is separated into pieces, each piece may give rise to a new plant. In *Thousand Plateaus*\(^{24}\), the concept of rhizome is used to denote a network in which, unlike in the tree-like organizations, any node can immediately connect with any other node. Networks replace hierarchies, but it is too trivial to associate the rhizome with the net: rhizome also involves the idea of process and it is aimed at explaining the relation between different concepts, which are only apparently in opposition. In fact, the notion of rhizome can express the relation between global and local, between space and place, as a conceptual model of the complexity of spatial systems and of the new configurations of globalized space. Carl Gustav Jung used the metaphor of rhizome to speak about the deep and invisible nature of life; Deleuze uses it to introduce a new model of science, language and space. Deleuze’s idea of space constitutes a pragmatics of the transit, of the dissemination of the sense (as Derrida would say) and it never closes the figure of space, that is, it is never completely defined and enclosed. Thus rhizome can be used to denote a processual network of landscapes. Applying this concept to the question of landscape has the two following consequences: (1) inside the rhizome we have different processual landscapes. By processual landscape I mean every mutual relationship belonging and constituting a landscape and involving the couple nature and culture, human being and environment, ecology and history of ideas; (2) the identities of landscapes are not something fixed, pre-given, unchanging and decided a-priori, but landscape is always in evolution. Thus I can assert that the contemporary configuration of places implies a collection of rhizomatic landscapes mutually defined. Furthermore, I suggest that rhizome is an open system: it involves the idea of a global space formed by multiple landscapes. Each landscape can be connected with others without necessarily following a unique and fixed trajectory. The production of places and landscapes happens according to different scales and relational modalities. The rhizome is a source of diversity: from the cartographic point of view it opens to infinite possibilities. The rhizome has never an end but, rather, “a milieu from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the one is always subtracted”.\(^{25}\) Thus the rhizome refers to the multiplicity of places, as


\(^{25}\) *Ivi*, p. 21.
well as to the important concept of milieu: Deleuze, in fact, uses the latter to denote the core of such a place-space, which is related to symbolic elements that are not always in evidence. I think that one of the challenges of thinking about the identity of place is constituted by elaborating a new concept of space made of a multiplicity of milieux. The concept of milieu is as crucial as the rhizome. The term is used in contemporary geography to denote places, landscapes and territories filled with cultural and social elements. We were not born in a milieu, but we create a milieu by an elective and emotional relationship. The concept of milieu allows us to go beyond the idea of place as something original, sedentary, and given by birth. Without the need to recur to a deterministic approach, we can say that the environment affords us to build a milieu. I think that the milieu is the historical, memorial, and at the same time potential, core of a landscape, according to a non-deterministic interpretative grammar that focuses on the relation between culture and nature. For this reason I think that the rhizomatic global space can be considered as made of milieux, multiple contexts, which constitute different places that we have to take care of.

Fig. 1