

Experiencing the Post-Mining Wonder

The technological developments of the last century left behind many abandoned industrial landscapes which constitute a threat to both the environment and to locals. Post-mining landscapes are the result of this process and they are expected to grow in number worldwide, in the coming decades. Reclamation, as widely defined in the literature by Alan Berger (Professor of Landscape Architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology), is the practice of recovering these landscapes as a laboratory for new scripts; minimizing their negative impacts and maximizing their aesthetic and ecological functionality. Moreover, the author denounces the failure of landscape designers in looking at these landscapes through a purely technical or economic perspective. Integrating the aesthetic experience beyond its traditional connotations within the sustainability discourse, is an issue raised also by many other experts in different fields of knowledge. Although recently many good examples of reclamation projects are arising, there is a lack of literature on how the scenic aesthetic component of these landscapes should be taken into account together with ecological values, especially for such controversial places as post-mining landscapes. Indeed rich imaginative perceptions are often unrelated to hard scientific data. In this project, this dilemma is explicitly addressed in a design challenge by integrating different research methods to examine post-mining landscapes like those in the Quadrilatero Ferrifero, Brazil. The imaginative method is phenomenological and includes a gradual development from personal observations to more objective spatial dimensions of the landscape, such as form, texture, structure and volume. The final result of this method is synthesized into archetypical place characters. On the other hand, the more regular scientific data are retrieved from field reports on ecological restoration and a narrative description of events during the mining activity. The final phase, aims at maximising the value of the 'creative jump'. This jump emphasises creativity as the researcher is able to strive for the best possible spatial synthesis, which comes to both symbolically and ecologically represent different sites. Finally, reflecting upon the design, some guidelines are derived to create the, so called, "Post-Mining wonder experience", that could be critically applied also to other post-mining reclamation projects.

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