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A landscape biography of the 'Land of Drumlins': Vooremaa, East Estonia

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Citation

Veldi, M. (2020, December 3). *A landscape biography of the 'Land of Drumlins': Vooremaa, East Estonia*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/138482>

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Issue date: 2020-12-03

Propositions

1. In landscape studies, for a long time there has been an enigmatic need for dividing landscape into natural and cultural landscapes. The same dichotomy can be observed between physical and cultural geography. Usually, the distinction was based on the intensity of human impact on a certain region. Still, natural and cultural landscapes do not have to be opposed to each other but can be understood as different layers or developments of the same landscape.
2. Humanistic geography, the "new cultural geography", and post-processual landscape archaeology share the same basic notion of the human agent as the creator of both form and meaning of landscape and place. They construct meaningful landscapes out of anonymous "space" and neutral "land". From this perspective, also notions of "nature" and the "natural" in the landscape are – in the end – human-bound and culturally informed.
3. As a palimpsest, the landscape is layered vertically and horizontally: features and layers are added and deleted, at the same time they exist together, and also separately. Time thickens the palimpsest, and there is a constant need for reminding that we do not study past landscapes, but today's landscapes with elements from the past.
4. One of the bases of heritage is values: heritage is what the present values in the past, and the value of the past lies in the contribution to contemporary senses of worth and identity. The idea of heritage and heritage management is commonly thought to be administrative and bureaucratic in its nature. However, heritage is foremost a social, not a political concept, making it much more ambiguous than just material culture protected by law.
5. The method of landscape biography effectively demonstrates that we are not living in "museum landscapes", and the mission of heritage management is to find sustainable ways of development and conservation at the same time. Historic GIS could be one application to detect the parts of landscapes, which need to be developed in more subtle manner.
6. Landscape archaeology and heritage management both deal with sites and issues in specific geographical locations that develop through time. Historical GIS enables methodologically to bridge landscape archaeology and heritage management.
7. Although the settlement sites in Vooremaa are spatially correlated with suitable arable land, they are seldomly located in the middle of large cultivated areas. Instead, they tend to be situated in gradient-rich zones connecting different land use units.
8. Natural sacred sites could be the "product" of synchronic processes mixing the life stories of Catholic saints with Romantic nature worship, which resulted in unique rural folk Catholicism more similar to paganism than Christianity in the eyes of local Lutheran priests.
9. Erection of hillforts suggests accumulation of food surplus, which was then in turn directed towards trade and handicraft. The shift in the settlement pattern in Vooremaa might directly be connected with grain cultivation, more specifically rye (*Secale cereale*). The Viking Age hillforts and their position in the landscape demonstrate an obvious connection between 10th – 11th century coin deposits and communication network of both, land and water routes.
10. A biographical approach to landscape suggests: life is an adventure; landscape is a fairy tale!