

The sense of place, after Luther Adams

By Joao Batista, 2016

Synopsis

The sense of place carries emotions, knowledge, and experiences difficult to explain and share. I often remember places where I have been and where I have experienced, and I wonder about what happens in those places at the moment the memory occurs.

What time is it in that place?

Is it day or night?

And who walks around?

Is it cold around there?

Does anyone in there need help?

Many questions and few answers. That's why I think we never really know a place. To really know a place well, it is necessary to experience it in many ways, at many different times, with different reading frames, sometimes farther sometimes closer. If experiencing a place is already truly difficult, sharing that experience is an even more complex exercise. The frame of one's experience is always distinct from the one with whom one shares, the variables are so many, not controlled, or controllable.

That is why, in connection with the idea of place, I return to my reflections, and I am even more convinced of the fact that I have the obligation of being very modest with what I may possibly know and with knowledge in general. Knowledge is always relative, and always revolves around the referential each one has been building. There is no common general reference, not even a reference point from which all references are organized.

Suggestion: listen to "The Place We Began", from John Luther Adams, 2009. He draws on T. S. Elliot: "... to return to the place we began and know it for the first time..."