
Teaching geography with nature. Reflections on the use and abuse of wilderness in didactics of geography

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Abstract

Nature is one of the most important concepts in geography. As Noel Castree (2005) says, it is maybe one of the reason why students approach geography and appreciate it. However the concept of nature in didactics of geography is often marginalized and other terms are preferred to that: landscape, environment or territory seems to be more important, at school. In this speech we want to introduce the importance of nature as a key concept in didactics of geography to stimulate the passion of the students and to activate their interest in geographical topics, underlining the importance of the only one discipline specifically dedicated to the study of the relationship between nature and humanity. The speech will focus on two principal objectives. First of all it will try to clarify a theoretical question about the misunderstood meaning of the concept of wilderness, too often used to express the idea of nature only as the kingdom of trees and animals. A nature-centered didactics of human geography could in fact be able to demolish the idea that wild is good and charming only when humans are excluded. In the second part, the speech will try to propose some applicative ideas for a nature-centered didactics of human geography by using some simple examples evident in the Italian context. By this way, will be demonstrated that the early interests about nature of so many students, could be the incentive to renew interest in geography. The aim is starting from wilderness but overcoming it, to reach a didactics of nature for human geography.

Keywords: Nature, wilderness, didactics of geography

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