

The importance of liminal spaces for shaping our future

Liminal spaces are threshold spaces where reality feels different, where we ask ourselves what is real and what is not. In the pop culture movement, the focus is on the physical place or the image of it that creates this surreal atmosphere and which make emptiness palpable.

Where does the concept of liminal spaces come from?

A liminal space is not a physical space, but originally a social space. The term "liminality" was first used by ethnologist Arnold van Gennep in 1909 to describe the transitional process of rites de passage. The term stands for the social space into which a person or a group of people enter when they have left the existing social order but have not yet arrived in the new order. For example, in some cultures this liminal space serves as a transitional space in which children become adults.

Victor Turner developed the concept in the 1960s for a theory of social change processes. For him, too, a liminal space describes a symbolic place outside the established world, beyond familiar concepts of space and time.

What characterizes such transitional spaces?

A liminal space in the symbolic sense is therefore a threshold and transitional space in which everything is possible but nothing is fixed, a place where one does not arrive, but only stays in order to arrive somewhere. The liminal state is not a fixed, but a fluctuating state of suspension. In liminality, conventional notions of space and time change. The present moment becomes more important than the past or the future. For example, pilgrims on a pilgrimage find themselves in a liminal space. They move in an in-between space where they are "on the edge" of something new, between what was and what will be.

Many of us have this experience when we engage in personal transformation processes. We enter a liminal space that is accompanied by contradictory emotions. The superfluous, the distractions and escapes fade away. We get in touch with the deeper layers of ourselves, which for many people living in the modern age causes discomfort and uncertainty. Uncertainty and the fear of losing control also usually feel uncomfortable and oppressive. It takes courage to cross the threshold of the familiar and known.

The potential of liminal spaces.

At the same time, the liminal space is full of possibilities and potential for renewal while we wait for what is to come. We witness and experience the revelation of what potentialities are present in me, in others, in the "in-between", in the transcendent. Liminality is able to promote deep personal and collective transformations and gives the creative space to unfold.

Richard Rohr defines liminality as "a sacred space in which the old world can fall apart and a larger world is revealed."

Prerequisites for designing these transformative transitional spaces.

Many of the qualities that make up liminality are such as: enduring the tension of not-knowing, the principle of emergence and resonance, inviting and welcoming emptiness, basic trust and letting go,

presence in the relational space, changing perspectives... These qualities are connected as well to the manifestation of coherence.

If we want to support ourselves and our society in a transformation towards more wisdom, foresight and creativity, we need more of these liminal spaces.

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