Fragments of Place - Learning from Leh

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During the fall of 2014 I spent one month in the region Ladakh in the indian himalayas. Ladakh, as goes for most places, is accompanied by several different narratives with different goals and agendas regarding the definition of past, present and future. One of these narratives, presented by Helena Norberg-Hodge in her book “Ancient Futures - Learning From Ladakh”, tells the story of a place rapidly losing its unique character to the forces of global modernisation.

This narrative has been the starting point for my thesis project which focuses on the subject of place and change.

As part of the thesis I have conducted a two-month long field study in Leh, the administrative center of Ladakh. During the field study I have explored various methods of place investigation. Methods more common to me, such as scale drawings, sketching, photography, I have complemented with methods I’ve only used briefly before, mainly interviews and video.

Parallel with the field study I have studied the idea of place through different writers on the topic.

The thesis work has been a way for me to develop my theoretical understandings as well as practical methods and at the same time testing the experience of working in an unfamiliar context.

The result is a discussion on place, how we understand and depict it, what it means to work with places and change. This discussion is conveyed through the particularities of Leh and Ladakh.