Olaf Kühne

Landscape and Power in Geographical Space as a Social-Aesthetic Construct

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Foreword

This book is the product of almost two decades of continuous occupation with issues of landscape and power. It represents a condensed cross section of my publications on that theme, most of which have appeared in German: in particular the four monographs *Landschaft in der Postmoderne. Das Beispiel des Saarlandes* (2006—my Ph.D. thesis in the Faculty of Sociology), *Distinktion Macht Landschaft. Zur sozialen Definition von Landschaft* (2008), *Stadt – Landschaft – Hybridität. Ästhetische Bezüge im postmodernen Los Angeles mit seinen modernen Persistenzen* (2012) and *Landschaftstheorie und Landschaftspraxis* (2013).[1] This book aims, however, not just to make my own research up to the present point in time available to an international readership, but also to document the ongoing discussion about landscape in the German-speaking countries of Central Europe—a discussion undoubtedly rooted in language and culture. Hence, my coverage of this debate will focus especially on the literature in German.

Broad studies of this kind are scarcely imaginable without the critical stimulus of one's fellow researchers in this and kindred areas which, in my case, extend into practice and art. Among my fellow academics I would like to thank in particular Vera Denzer, Ludger Gailing, Markus Leibenath, Heidi Megerle, Rainer Kazig, Sebastian Kinder, Jochen Kubiniok, Barbara Neumann, Christoph Moning, Markus Reinke, Olaf Schnur, Annette Spellerberg, Boris Stemmer, Uta Stock-Gruber and Klaus Sachs. And special thanks must go to Diedrich Bruns, with whom I have for more than 10 years delved into the consequences of a constructivist perspective on landscape. For their observations on landscape and art my thanks are due to Harald Hullmann and Karl-Heinz Einberger; and, for stimulating conversations and constructive remarks from the point of view of professional practice, especially to Holger Zeck, Detlef Reinhard, Hanns Albert Letter, Reinhard Guth, Volker Wild, Bertold Huwig, Kurt Kniebe, Jörn Wallacher and Ulrich Franke. Finally, I would

[1]These titles could be rendered in English as: 'Landscape in Postmodernity: the Saarland' (2006); 'Distinction, Power, Landscape: on the Social Definition of Landscape' (2008); 'City – Landscape – Hybridity: Aesthetic Dimensions in Postmodern Los Angeles' (2012); and 'Landscape in Theory and Practice' (2013).

like to thank my present and former colleagues, especially Corinna Jenal, Albert Rossmeier, Antje Schönwald and Florian Weber, who have worked together with me in this field. For critical support on language matters, I thank Walter Strauss and especially for translation Joseph Swann.

My greatest debt of thanks, however, is to my wife, Sibylle Berger, who has continuously supported me in my work and provided many valuable and significant impulses.

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Olaf Kühne

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Landscape is a complex construct with a wide 'semantic train' (Hard 1969) of "associations, emotions, and evocations" (Hard 2002 [1983], p. 178) that allow the concept to be applied to any spatial context whose internal ordering "somehow suggests (or can be taken to suggest) a harmonious experiential whole" (Schrage 2004, p. 63). The topic has recently gained increasing attention in political, public, and scientific debate (see Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011). Climate change, the growing importance of renewably sourced energy, the demographic shift, and the transformation of industrial into service-based societies are some of the many developments connected with change in our concepts of landscape. Added relevance has come from the insights of the 'new cultural geography' into the interactions of society and what it constitutes as 'space' (see Cosgrove and Jackson 1987; Gregory and Ley 1988; Cosgrove and Domosh 1997). For landscape is, as Freyer has argued, a good deal more than "an assemblage of natural facts": it is "a stretch of land with an inherently human dimension, and as such a reflexive construct" (Freyer 1996 [1966], p. 70).

That this construct is largely a matter of aesthetic interpretation was noted by Georg Simmel as far back as 1913. Simmel wrote (1996, p. 191): "Where we really see landscape rather than just an agglomeration of natural objects, we have a work of art *in statu nascendi*." Consistently with Simmel's dictum, Hauser and Kamleithner (2006, p. 74) argue that landscape is among the most "central, frequently used and, for that very reason, unclear concepts of the past thousand years of European political and intellectual history." Not only among specialists, but also in public and political discourse, the concept of landscape reveals a flexibility in its contextual application that leads Gailing and Leibenath (2012) to propose the following characterization:

- The term 'landscape' is comparatively open in meaning and, overall, has positive connotations; hence, it offers wide scope for identification.
- It brackets together a range of different, spatially oriented research issues.

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- It gives rise to opposing and, indeed, contradictory interpretations, and hence stimulates "reflection and controversy [...] about different concepts of landscape and research ideas, and above all about how to design the spaces in which we live" (Gailing and Leibenath 2012, p. 96; for similar comments see Jones and Daugstad 1997; Schenk 2013).

Central aspects of current debate and reflection about landscape (escpecially in the German language area) are (a) whether it should be understood as a physical entity independent of the observer (as proposed in positivist/essentialist perspectives) or simply as a social and/or individual construct; and (b) whether—and if so to what extent—the city, too, can be seen as 'landscape'. The extension of the term 'landscape' to the city has in recent decades become increasingly common in sociological and urban planning contexts. The usage is associated not only with declared 'wild' areas in urban settings (e.g. parks, ruderal vegetation etc.), but also with the historical development of the notion of landscape as an essentially aesthetic way of looking at nature (Fischer 2011; Kühne 2012b), and with the use of natural materials for cultural purposes (e.g. house-building with stone)—a point to be further discussed later.

To ask what can be classified as landscape, and when and by whom it can be so classified, is to enter into a process of negotiation with diverse cultural and social aspects. Both the question of the social interpretation of landscape and that of the articulation of individual and personal interests inherent in that concept point to the broader issue of the origins of landscape discourse in societal power structures. Moreover, power is invariably linked with at least relative powerlessness (Paris 2005). This is also true of landscape. Where, for example, an area has already been taken over by industry, it is no longer possible for alternative uses (e.g. forestry) to gain a foothold. Certain ways of looking at and interpreting landscape will, in fact, always dominate over others; this is evident even in European funding policies, which support some uses of space and suppress others (see e.g. Kost and Schönwald 2015a). Gerhard Hard puts it like this: "Today any halfway competent, methodologically reflected, socio-geographical fieldwork will—hopefully as a matter of course—ask not only what social, economic, ecological and historical evidence can be detected in a specific area or landscape, but also what cannot, for that very reason, be detected (even though its implications for that specific environment might well have been more important). It will go further, too, and ask what we perhaps think we are seeing simply because we project our (possibly false) prior knowledge onto something whose meaning is, in fact, entirely different" (Hard 2008, p. 268). This way of reading landscape implies continuous reflection on power structures: What does a particular physical context *not* show? What does a particular society *not* interpret and accept as landscape? Moreover, what power structures lie behind such absences?

These questions frame the constructivist view of landscape that forms a theoretical background to this book. A fundamental tenet of social constructivism is that knowledge of the world in which we live comes only through interaction with those with whom we live. It is impossible, then, to know the world 'as it is'; we can

access it only in pre-interpreted form. This is not to deny the existence of physical things, nor to deny their meaning for society. Social constructivism is concerned, rather, with how these meanings come about and how they are communicated. Wolfgang Welsch illustrates the relation between the two levels—that of things and that of the social construction of their meanings—with the example of architecture: "Architecture always has a twofold effect, real and symbolic. At the level of 'reality', it defines our living spaces and the scope of our actions; at the symbolic level, it shapes our ideas of urbanity, the environment and society. Doing so, it affects not only our practical lives but also our imaginations, desires and aspirations" (Welsch 1993, p. 13)

The social constructivist perspective has a long tradition in the social and cultural sciences, calling on such names as Husserl (1973 [1929]), Merleau-Ponty (1945), Berger and Luckmann (1966), Mead and Morris (1967), Blumer (1973), Schütz (1971 [1962], 1971, 2004 [1932]), and Schutz and Luckmann 1973). Specifically in the area of landscape research it has also shaped discussion for some decades—see e.g. Cosgrove (1984), Greider and Garkovich (1994), Duncan (1995), Makhzoumi (2002), Kühne (2006a, b, 2008, 2013), Jones (2007), DeLue (2008), Gailing (2008, 2012), Paasi (2008) Stakelbeck and Weber (2012), Bruns and Kühne (2013), Gailing and Leibenath (2015), Kost and Schönwald (2015b), Kühne and Weber (2015). A question closely connected with the constructivist perspective is: Who has power to define the terms of the debate, and how is that authority distributed? Applied to landscape this could be phrased as the question of the relation between what we call landscape and the societal power structures and processes that underlie this concept—a question that has come to the fore in the sciences concerned with the shaping and interpretation of geographical space since the late 1990s (see e.g. Olwig 1984, 1995, 2002; Mitchell 2001, 2002a, b; Schein 1997; Kühne 2008a, b; Mitchell 2008; Wescoat 2008; Kost and Schönwald 2015a; Leibenath 2015). Most of these studies, however, are more concerned with the impact of power on physical space than with the processes by which our ideas of landscape, and the preferences, norms and values with which it is connected, are socially constructed. It is these, nevertheless, that underlie such physical incursions. The present book aims to compensate for this bias (see also in this respect Kühne 2001, 2005, 2006a, 2008a, b, 2012, 2013; Kühne and Schönwald 2015); after all, as Schein (1997, p. 663) has succinctly put it: "When the action results in a tangible landscape element, or total ensemble, the cultural landscape becomes the discourse materialized."

The focus on the social foundations of the definition of landscape demands a widening of the perspective from classical geographical concerns to sociological (especially here the sociology of knowledge) and philosophical (especially aesthetic) points of view. Nevertheless, although the discussion of globalization and 'neoliberalism' in the contemporary socio-spatial sciences takes account of economic and political considerations and their implications with regard to the exercise and impact of power, it generally ignores administrative workings and civil, as well as scientific involvement in these processes. This, too, is a gap the present book aspires to fill.

The turn to constructivist positions in sociological research implies an intensified interest in language and allied sign systems, something Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 68) already clearly expressed half a century ago: "Normally, of course, the decisive system is linguistic. Language objectivates the shared experiences and makes them available to all within the linguistic community" (see also Burr 2005; and in more specifically spatial contexts Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Schein 1993; Greider and Garkovich 1994; Myers 1996; Cosgrove and Domosh 1997; Weber 2013). The quotation underlines the need for a high level of cultural sensibility in landscape research, given the firm rooting of the concept of landscape in cultural strata. Attention in this book will focus primarily on German-language cultures, but also to some extent on those of the English-speaking world. An overview of similar concepts in other cultures will be given in Chap. 3.

The social constructivist perspective taken in this book informs several different fields of sociologically oriented landscape research, including geography, psychology and philosophy, as well as architecture, urban and landscape planning, and sociology itself. A multi-perspective approach of this kind promises to do more justice to the complexity of the topic of landscape than any approach from a single research angle such as environmental psychology or geography. Given the wide range of disciplines in which landscape research is conducted, it cannot be conceived in linear terms: it consists, after all, of many parallel strands whose origins are in some cases independent of each other, and which may, indeed, cultivate mutual ignorance or even opposition, while other strands may be closely interwoven. Research initiatives may in some cases have been abandoned—and perhaps taken up again later in other contexts. The result is that there is today no consensus about what is and is not 'landscape', how it is constituted, or how it should in future be regarded. One of the tasks of the present book, then, is to provide an overview of the central strands of landscape research and to examine the implications of landscape in the various contexts in which it is intimately connected with the exercise of power.

To do this is to reflect on the meaning of power in social relationships—for, as Bourdieu (1991, p. 30) remarks, "power over space is power in one of its most privileged forms". Moreover, it is to reflect on the spatial manifestations of power at various levels: that of physical space, that of landscape (including the individual perception of physical space) as a social construct, and that of the social dimension of change occurring in that space (Kühne 2008a). On the one hand "landscape today […] is determined by an aesthetic of 'nature' that reflects in the most subtle manner structures of ownership and power" (Franzen 2003, p. 124); on the other, power over nature means power over man (Althusser and Balibar 1968/69; Hickel 1984)—even if nature and landscape are not identical (see e.g. Haber 2006).

Against the background of an increasing sensibility to the natural environment in wide segments of the population, the last half century has witnessed vociferous complaints about changes to the landscape. Stigmatized as "loss, faulty planning, sell-out, exploitation, pollution, disfigurement and destruction" (Kaufmann 2005, p. 10), these can be interpreted as the result of an unequal distribution of power, both on the level of physical space and on that of the discourses in which landscape

and change are defined (see also Krebs 2005). The aesthetic dimension of landscape also determines its symbolic relevance for processes of social distinction (see Bourdieu 1979; Zukin 1993; Duncan and Duncan 2004), whether these have to do with how it is perceived and valued, or with how it is physically distributed—e.g. which social group is to live where and under what terms. In this respect, the argument of this book is directed primarily to scholars and practitioners of the many disciplines and sub-disciplines concerned with physical space and landscape, as well as to those concerned with its perception and articulation. These include not only sociologists and philosophers but also geographers, landscape architects and planners.

Academic discourse on power is often seen as necessarily 'critical' (Leibenath 2015), and this is frequently taken (or even required—e.g. by Narr 2010) to mean critical in neo-Marxist terms. I have no quarrel with critical thinking in the philosophical sense of serious reflection, of non-affirmative inquiry into current structures of power and landscape, or of social-constructivist approaches to the contingency of language. But the perspective adopted here will not be neo-Marxist; rather it will take its cue from the theory of equity and fairness proposed by Rawls (1971), Nussbaum (2006), Tremmel (2009), Fainstein (2010) and Sen (2011)—which does not mean, however, that neo-Marxist diagnoses of the contemporary world should be rejected simply because they lead to different conclusions. The underlying concept of equity proposed here is based on the maximizing of vital opportunities, which, as Dahrendorf (2007, p. 44) observes, means "first and foremost opportunities to choose—i.e. options". Moreover, Dahrendorf goes on to say: "These require two things: the right to participate and the offer of a range of goods and activities from which to choose"; one might add that the choices in question must be meaningful (Kühne 2011a). The equitable distribution of opportunities can be derived from the second principle of John Rawls' theory of justice, namely that "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality and opportunity" (Rawls 1971, p. 302). Fair chances for all means, in this context, that people of similar ability should have similar opportunities in life. Systematic inequality of access to offices and positions in society (e.g. on grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, origins and ancestry is thereby ruled out (see also Kühne 2011b). It is not enough, however, to reduce this to legal terms (e.g. equality of statutory rights to social positions), as this takes no account of individual starting points. Given the practical difficulty of modifying a person's primary social status, Rawls demands intervention by the state to compensate for such inequities—a basically liberal position, which he sees as entailing taxation, and with it a restriction of the liberal tenet of untrammeled property rights. Dahrendorf (2007, p. 86) argues that secondary inequities are acceptable "so long as they do not put the winners in a position to hinder the full social participation of others or to prevent them on grounds of poverty from exercising their civil rights". While admitting that the formal regulation of social life contravenes the "hope of finally attaining an ideal human society" (2008, p. 67), Dahrendorf points out that such hope invariably

contains a seed of inequality, of the division of society into friend and foe, and "hence [of] intolerance and the abuse of power" (ibid. 76; for a more detailed account of this position see Kühne 2011a and Kühne and Meyer 2015).

The present book is the result of some two decades of continuous involvement with theoretical and practical issues of landscape and planning. Precisely this latter aspect, with its methodology of participatory observation, has provided insights into the inner workings of power with relation to space and spatial planning (see especially Sects. 4.3.2 and 4.3.3. I have also made wide use of my own research findings, whether based on quantitative questionnaires (e.g. Kühne 2006a; Kühne and Spellerberg 2010, 2011), qualitative and quantitative media analysis (e.g. Kühne 2012a), qualitative interviews (as in Kühne and Schönwald 2015), or (socio) theoretical reflection (e.g. Kühne 2008a, 2014, 2015).

Apart from this introduction and a concluding summary, the book has four main chapters. Chapter 2 (Theoretical Foundations) is concerned largely with the perspectives and concepts of social constructivism, landscape, power, and aesthetics that underlie the entire work. Chapter 3 (The Genesis of Social Landscapes and their Physical Manifestations) considers the co-evolution of social constructs of landscape and human impacts on physical space. This already broaches issues of power and the development of concepts of landscape that form the matter of Chap. 4 (The Social Genesis of the Definition of Landscape). Here various processes of socialization are described in which landscape is constituted not only in itself but also as a medium of social distinctions. Chapter 5 (Case Studies) considers examples of the impact of power on and in landscape, from physical organization through the 'American grid' or through the imposition of socialist doctrine, to the struggle for interpretive authority over the values and ideals involved in particular landscape concepts. One such context cited here is the expansion of renewable energy sources; another is the communicative structures of model railway enthusiasts.

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Chapter 2
Theoretical Foundations

This chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual foundation of the present work. These comprise on the one hand a survey of the main theoretical perspectives of a social constructivist approach to landscape and its aesthetics, and on the other a brief outline of the concept of power.

2.1 Social Constructivism

A notable gap has opened in recent decades between the largely constructivist positions of the social sciences and humanities and the (for the most part) realist perspective of the natural sciences (Egner 2010). The tension can be felt within individual sciences like psychology, sociology and geography, whose roots lie in both cultures, and which make an essential contribution to landscape research. Trepl (2012, p. 29) illustrates the different approaches in terms of their attitude to concepts: "Concepts for the natural scientist are on the whole means to an end; for the human and social scientist the understanding of concepts is itself the end"—so long, I would add, as we are not talking about those aspects of the human sciences, like quantitative sociological research, that predominantly use the methods of natural science.

The realism of natural science springs from an acceptance of the possibility of objective knowledge and of its attainment through appropriate empirical procedures. This, in turn, presumes the existence of a reality structured independently of human knowing processes but accessible through those processes (Gergen 1985; Bailer-Jones 2005; Burr 2005; Gergen and Gergen 2009). The extreme case of realism, known as 'naïve realism', amounts to an unconditional belief in the reality of the physically perceived world (Wetherell and Still 1998). Burr (1998, 2005) distinguishes three aspects of what we call 'reality': truth as opposed to falsehood, materiality as opposed to illusion, and essence (what a thing is in itself) as opposed to construct (what human/social knowledge makes of it). In contrast to such

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realism, constructivism sees reality as the product of everyday social practice: the result not just of thought but of action (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This immediately involves a critical dimension: "Social constructivism insists that we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves" (Burr 2005, pp. 2–3; see also Schütz and Luckmann 1973). From the thesis that "reality is socially constructed" Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 1) derive the conclusion that "the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs".

Hence, far from being anti-empirical, social constructivist research is devoted to empirical investigation of "which specific interpretations of reality do, and which do not, achieve normative status" (Kneer 2009, p. 5). The focus here is on the contextual anchoring of empirical knowledge—indeed, the constructivist question itself arises in the context of specific scientific concerns. Since the initial appearance of the movement in the 1960s, many research fields—from gender and cultural studies, through critical and discursive psychology, to discourse analysis, deconstruction, post-structuralism, and postmodern approaches in general—have adopted social constructivist ideas (Burr 2005; Kühne 2006a, 2008a; Gergen and Gergen 2009). In contrast to radical constructivism (see e.g. Luhmann 1984; Maturana and Varela 1987; Glasersfeld 1995), social constructivism, however, is not rooted in the biological sciences, nor does it pursue a full-scale epistemological program. It is more concerned with pre-scientific life practices and their social dimensions of change (Hacking 1999; Miggelbrink 2002; Egner 2010; Kühne 2013a; Lynch 2016). Reusswig (2010, p. 79) cites the example of climate change to illustrate the latent conflict in these approaches from a constructivist point of view: "That natural scientists so often reject the basic thesis […] of the social 'construction' of climate is due as a rule to an erroneously derived, abstract perception of social actors and systems as 'physical objects' bound up in some sort of causal chain with natural processes."

Social constructivist approaches are particularly indebted to the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz, which in turn takes its cue on the one hand from Max Weber's sociology of *Verstehen* (understanding informed by empathy), with its key concept of 'meaningfully derived action', and on the other from the 'phenomenological philosophy' of Edmund Husserl. This, according to Zahavi (2007, p. 13), entails "the philosophical analysis of the various forms in which objects appear". For Husserl (1973 [1929]), intersubjective experience is constitutive for the development of the individual subject, who can only experience 'the world' as a member of society. Linking Weber's sociological approach with Husserl's philosophy, Schütz (2004 [1932]) extended this by introducing the concept of 'social meaning': i.e. the meanings men and women accord to their actions. This shifted the focus of sociological research onto the individual subject and the meanings that may be associated with their actions—a way of thinking fundamentally different from that of natural science, whose objects develop no self-awareness, no understanding of the world, and no interests, motives or 'meanings' (see Schütz 1971 [1962]).

In line with these reflections, interpretations of the (socially generated) world by social scientists can be thought of as "second level constructs: constructs of constructs formed in and by the social activities of men and women whose behavior scientists observe and seek to explain in accordance with the procedures of their science" (Schütz 1971 [1962], p. 7). 'Construct' here "does not imply an intentional act, but a preconscious cultural process" (Kloock and Spahr 2007, p. 56). For every act of perception is informed by prior knowledge of the world in the form of abstractions (Schütz 1971)—as in the present instance with respect to 'landscape': "nowhere is there such a thing as a pure and simple fact" (Schütz 1971 [1962], p. 5; Burr 2005). The social construction of 'world' takes place in the fusion of individual sense percepts into an overall picture; nor should perception in this sense be thought of as an isolated event: it is the result of "a highly complex process of interpretation in which present percepts are related to past ones" (Schütz 1971 [1962], pp. 123–124) and referential structures thereby actualized.

Of central importance in the experience of 'world' as the social reality in which we live, learn, grow and suffer (Schütz and Luckmann 1973) is a process of typification that gains in importance with increasing social distance: "The typifications of social interaction become progressively anonymous the farther away they are from the face-to-face situation. Every typification, of course, entails incipient anonymity" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 31). The process of typification involves a socially communicated body of values, roles, rules and norms—one need only think of the maxims cited in everyday actions—that ascribe normality and abnormality to situations, actions and appearances, as well as to spatial objects and clusters. It follows that, far from being isolated interpretive schemata, typifications rely for their genesis and meaning on mutual interconnectedness (Schütz and Luckmann 1973). Here, objects play a central role, for "every object and every utensil points to those anonymous people who produced it so that other anonymous people could use it to attain typical ends with typical means" (Schütz 1971 [1962], p. 20). Typifications of this sort construct a familiar, routine world without our having to reflect on the conditions and processes through which it has come about (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Garfinkel 1967; Zahavi 2007). For the point of familiarity and routine is not that we should know some truth but that we should be able to act in a social context.

Knowledge comes about in a threefold network of familiarity, recognition and belief (Schütz 1971 [1962], 1971):

- Something is familiar if we "understand not only what it is and how it is constituted but also why it is so" (Schütz 1971, p. 157)—for instance, those houses are built of wood so that people can live in them.
- We recognize something if we "know what it is but do not ask why" (ibid.)—for example, we can recognize a blast furnace if we see one, without (unless we are specialists in the field) knowing how it works.
- If we do not know, or only vaguely know, what something is, we might say 'I believe it is a such and such'. Belief in this sense may be more or less well founded, or based on trust in authority, or be the fruit of ignorance (ibid.). Thus,

a shield volcano may be recognized as a volcano without any knowledge of how it came to have its particular form, or it may be thought of simply as an elevation in the landscape.

Knowledge grows and is communicated through social interactions and continuously changing processes of interpersonal relation and exchange. It is these, rather than immediate individual perceptions, that are responsible for most of what a normal adult knows. Social processes of negotiation and mediation are also constitutive in the development of the individual. For, as Mead and Morris (1967) observed, one does not primarily perceive oneself directly but indirectly, from the viewpoint of other members of one's social group, either individually communicated or generalized. By taking over the attitudes of others, one objectifies oneself (ibid.). Knowledge, in other words, is socially communicated (Schütz and Luckmann 1973). We do not 'naturally' know what is and is not a volcano: we learn this in various ways, from family, friends, teachers etc.

Two sorts of social interaction can in this context be distinguished: 'non-symbolic'—instinctual interactions that require no reflection; and 'symbolic'—interactions whose meaning is generated in a process of social negotiation or definition using signs (Mead and Morris 1967; Blumer 1973). Signs become symbols when the same meaning is made for the recipient as for the giver of the sign: for example, when concertgoers clap their hands the pianist regards this as a sign of approbation for the performance; or where a flowerbed is marked off from the path with a low hedge, this is taken to mean that one should not walk on the bed—i.e. it communicates the will of the person who planted the hedge. Symbolic communication involves what Berger and Luckmann (1966) describe as processes of externalization and internalization. Externalization is the ascription of meaning to objects, making them into signs—e.g. a knife as a commonly accepted sign of aggression (Burr 2005; see also Costonis 1982). Conversely, internalization refers to the socialization of objects and actions in the symbolic world of a particular society with its everyday meanings, institutions, rules and typifications (Burr 2005; for greater detail see below: Sect. 4.1—Socialization of Landscape Constructs).

Symbolic interactions are generally connected with 'things' in the broadest sense of whatever a person perceives in their world—physical objects, like a tree or a chair; other people, like friends or enemies; institutions, like school or the government; ideals and principles, like independence or honesty; the actions of others, like commands or wishes; and whatever situations an individual encounters in daily life (Blumer 1973). For in relation to things, people act on the basis of the meaning these things have for them, which originates in their mutual social interactions (Blumer 1973), one meaning adding to another. Such meanings are not stable or irreversible: they "are negotiated and changed in the interpretive process engaged in by the individual with the things they encounter" (Blumer 1973, p. 81). Their inherent reversibility opens these meanings to the power processes of discourse, which may be deeply interested in their preservation or revision; and this introduces the question as to who has this power, who can promote or defend one meaning against another (see e.g. Weber 2013; Hannigan 2014; Kühne and Weber 2015).

Social constructivist landscape research regards physical objects like trees, houses and fields "as symbols […]—concrete material embodiments of social ideas, relations, habits, lifestyles etc.—in which the social is abstracted from its physical embodiments by a process of interpretation" (Hard 1995, p. 52). This perspective distinguishes social constructivism from other constructivist viewpoints like radical constructivism or the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985—see also Glasze and Mattissek 2009; Weber 2013, 2015), which focuses on social communication to the (virtual) exclusion of the material dimension of communicative power processes.

To return to the question of knowledge: the acquisition of knowledge, and hence knowledge itself—especially in the case of socially communicated meanings—is not equally available to all. It is both socially and culturally differentiated. The reality of a Tibetan monk—to cite the example given by Berger and Luckmann (1966)—is quite different from that of an American businessman. Moreover, this variation in the construction of 'reality' and the distribution of knowledge indicates the historical nature of thought (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Stearns 1995). The sociocultural differentiation of knowledge is in many cases also geographical—as the example of the monk and the businessman already suggests. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, however, that among the many realities of science, business, administration, politics etc. one stands out as the cornerstone and point of relation of all the others: the reality of everyday life. This is characterized by pre-arranged patterns; it seems already objectivized, for its meanings have already been inscribed before the individual subject encounters and acts within it: We are born into a world whose conceptual framework and categories are already given in the inherited culture" (ibid.; see also Burr 2005). The reality of the everyday world seems to be ordered around the 'here' of the body, as the condition of all spatial experience of the world in which we live (Merleau-Ponty 1945), and the 'now' of the bodily present. This 'here and now' is the starting point for the construction of the individual's world: it is accepted as real and requires no further verification (Berger and Luckmann 1966). In this sense, the reality of the world is socially mediated: "The reality of everyday life further presents itself to me as an intersubjective world, a world that I share with others" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 23).

The everyday world is, then, perceived as real and objective (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This involves the objectivization of essentially subjective experiences—i.e. their embodiment in the processes and objects of daily life: "The reality of everyday life is not only filled with objectivations [sic]; it is only possible because of them" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 35). Three stages of objectivization can be distinguished (Schütz and Luckmann 1973; Rammert 2007). In the first stage, it takes the form of actions in shared situations—e.g. the discursive agreement to (constructively) judge a landscape beautiful. In the second stage, the term is applied to the physical products of human action—technical devices and constructs such as gardens, woods, cultivated land, settlements etc. The third stage is characterized by the situative decoupling effected by the abstract sign systems of language. These introduce a new level of anonymization and idealization (Schütz

and Luckmann 1973)—for example, the word ‘landscape’ releases specific associations irrespective of whether or not it is used in a physical space that might normally be referred to as landscape. Abstraction and anonymity increase with increasing distance (social as well as spatial) from the point of reference of an individual’s ‘here and now’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Individualized personal perceptions will then often yield to generalizations like ‘they are typical nouveau riches/on benefits/Americans/East Germans etc.’ (see Schlottmann 2005).

The structures of everyday reality remain unproblematic so long as the routine typifications that generate them are not disturbed by the need for adjustment; or as Schütz and Luckmann (1973) put it, so long as the unbroken chain of everyday structures can be taken for granted. This also applies to persons: the stranger who conforms to the expected roles of my world is unproblematic, he ‘fits in’, he is ‘integrated’; he only becomes problematic when I have to adjust my own perspective to fit him (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Or in other words: “The world is accepted as familiar and in that sense ‘real’ up to the point, at least, when it becomes problematic and needs to be questioned” (Werlen 2000, p. 39).

The social division of knowledge which has accompanied its rapid expansion in the course of the modernization of society has created more or less closed provinces of meaning that are clearly marked off from everyday knowledge—one need only think of academic sociologists and philosophers, or of mechatronic engineers, designers and planners. All such groups tend to develop their own symbols of authority, ranging from working apparel and dress codes to specialist language, which distinguish them from laypeople (Berger and Luckmann 1966; for greater detail see below: Sect. 4.2). These symbolic worlds are in constant competition with each other—as evidenced, for example in the question, whether landscape is a physical object or a social construct. However, the development of alternative symbolic worlds shows that the interpretations inherent in earlier worlds of meaning were neither conclusive nor mandatory; for absolute knowledge of the world (including oneself) is unattainable. As Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 116) observe: “Because they are historical products of human activity, all socially constructed universes change, and the change is brought about by the concrete actions of human beings”. The application of this insight to landscape, with its implications of continuing historical change, is a central concern of this book.

2.2 Landscape

From a social constructivist perspective landscape is not an objective, univocally definable entity existing within a physical, material world: it is the sociocultural product of a process of mediation (Wojtkiewicz and Heiland 2012; see also Cosgrove 1985; Greider and Garkovich 1994; Graham 1998; Ipsen 2002; Mitchell 2002; Soyez 2003; Kaufmann 2005; Ahrens 2006; Kühne 2006a, b, c, d, 2008a, 2009; Chilla 2007; Backhaus et al. 2007; Lingg et al. 2010; Micheel 2012). Greider and Garkovich (1994, p. 2) explain this process as follows: “Through sociocultural

phenomena, the physical environment is transformed into landscapes that are the reflections of how we define ourselves". Cosgrove (1984, p. 13) succinctly characterized the transition from an objectivist to a constructivist understanding of landscape in visual terms: "Landscape is not merely the world we see; it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world." This reflected the approach of W.G. Hoskins in *The Making of the English Landscape* (2006 [1956]), which examined not only the development of physical structures but also the historical process of affective appropriation in which the concept of England and its landscape came into being. Commenting on the academic dimension of this insight, Cosgrove (1985, p. 47) warned that "the landscape idea is a visual ideology; an ideology all too easily adopted unknowingly into geography when the landscape idea is transferred as an unexamined concept into our discipline". Ideological blindness of this sort has not been restricted to geography; it was (and to some extent still is) to be found in neighbouring disciplines as well; but, as already observed—and thanks not least to Dennis Cosgrove's work—the situation in geography has improved.

Landscapes are the product on the one hand of abstraction, on the other of emotive projection (Goodman 1951; see also Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Greider and Garkovich 1994; Agnew 1997; Cosgrove 1998; Graham 1998; Howard 2011); the interpretation of sense impressions that generates them is—as indicated in the previous section on social constructivism—based on what the individual learns in and from the long social evolutionary process of normative acculturation. Landscape, then, is experienced not as a visual image of the world but as an integral aspect of its meaning (see also Burr 1995; Assmann 1999; Wöhler 2001); or as Helmut Rheder already observed in the early 1930s, "that nature is grasped as landscape is the work of thought" (1932, p. 1). It is this that produces forms and distinctions between the similar and dissimilar, between "what human vision separates and moulds into separate entities, […] into the individuality of 'landscape'" (Simmel 1996 [1913], p. 95).

The process is unconscious—which is why "it does not appear to us as a social construction, but as reality" (Ipsen 2006, p. 31). Gailing (2012, p. 3) describes it as follows: landscapes become "more or less distinct spatial units, reified into an ontological synthesis"—reification (or hypostasization) being what Werlen (2000) has called the mental transformation of a concept of landscape or space into a thing. Following Schlottmann (2005), Gailing (2012, p. 149) understands the reification of 'spaces' or 'landscapes' as the "unequivocal conception of spatial units as independent of human action and the human observer, and hence as in principle non-negotiable" (see also Miggelbrink 2002); this represents, he continues, "the treatment of abstractions as substantial entities" (ibid.). The construct 'landscape' is thought of as an immediately perceptible object. This entails, however, a linguistic process commonly observable in phrases such as 'the Camargue/Cape Breton etc. landscape', which are normative as well as descriptive, for in everyday usage they associate with terms denoting beauty, wildness or other values connected with the desirability of conservation. In any investigation of landscape—as in all constructivist research—the "context of language usage" (Strüver and Wucherpfennig

2009, p. 117) plays an indispensable role. This immediately poses the question of power: Whose language? Who constructs landscape, in what social context, and how? Who establishes the construct as normative?

The conscious perception of ‘landscape’ as the inherent form of specific objects entails more than merely recognizing those objects, “just as understanding a text entails more than recognizing the meaning of its words” (Berendt 2005, p. 29). In the terminology of systems theory it can be seen as an act of complexity reduction, or what Miggelbrink (2009, p. 191) calls “a reaction to a perceived need for structuring” (see also in a landscape context Papadimitriou 2010; Kühne 2004, 2014)—an act that enables (and is indispensable for) orientation. Without such reduction, “every tree would have to be encountered anew, for none is quite the same as any other” (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1997, p. 901), and no number of adjacent trees would be recognizable as a wood (see also Tuan 1974; Kaplan et al. 1998; Nohl 1997; Kühne 2008b). Burckhardt (2006 [1991], p. 82) draws these considerations together when he calls landscape a “trick of our perceptions that allows us to collate heterogeneous factors into a picture, excluding other factors”.

It would, however, be wrong to think that in a social constructivist perspective objects like trees, houses or grass do not exist—that they are mere fictions or products of illusion. What that perspective maintains is something quite different: that the reality of those things is the fruit of a process of social production. Edley (2001) states clearly that language is not the only reality social constructivists accept (see also Newman and Paasi 1998; Chilla 2007; Marshall 2008): “They do not suppose that, say, Nottingham appears in the middle of the M1 motorway because it says so on the page and neither do they imagine it somehow springs into existence at the moment it is mentioned. The way that constructivism upsets our common-sense understandings is much more subtle than this. Instead, a constructivist might point out that Nottingham is a city by virtue of a text (i.e. by royal decree) and that boundaries—where it begins and ends—are also matter for negotiation and agreement. The argument is not, therefore, that Nottingham doesn’t exist, but that it does so as a socially constructed reality” (Edley 2001, p. 439).

Our stock of knowledge of landscape also has a history. Following the general principles outlined by Schütz and Luckmann (1973), this is part of our ‘sedimentary experience’ (this will be treated in greater detail in Chap. 3). The experience of landscape does not derive only—or even principally—from direct sensory confrontation with physical objects designated as ‘landscape’. Other elements of the socialization process—interaction with parents, peer group, teachers, films and books (see Kühne 2008a)—play a more crucial role in cultivating the ability to construct physical space as landscape, and hence in the genesis of individual concepts of landscape. This ability depends on one’s socially mediated individual stock of knowledge—a cultural mediation that is “as a rule a guideline to [a process of] selection, a filtering out of impressions” (Burckhardt 2006 [1995], p. 257; see also Jacks 2004).

As shown, the socialization process conveys specific social interpretations, assessments and symbolic occupations of objects. Accordingly, “spatial images play so important a role in the collective memory” (Halbwachs 1992 [1939], p. 2).