



Edited by Jan Kolen, Hans Renes and Rita Hermans

# Landscape Biographies

Geographical, Historical and  
Archaeological Perspectives  
on the Production and  
Transmission of Landscapes

Amsterdam  
University  
Press



## Landscape Biographies

# Landscape and Heritage Studies

Landscape and Heritage Studies (LHS) is an English-language series about the history, heritage and transformation of the natural and cultural landscape and the built environment. The series aims at the promotion of new directions as well as the rediscovery and exploration of lost tracks in landscape and heritage research. Both theoretically oriented approaches and detailed empirical studies play an important part in the realization of this objective. The series explicitly focuses on:

- the interactions between physical and material aspects of landscapes and landscape experiences, meanings and representations;
- perspectives on the temporality and dynamic of landscape that go beyond traditional concepts of time, dating and chronology;
- the urban-rural nexus in the context of historical and present-day transformations of the landscape and the built environment;
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*Jan Kolen, Johannes Renes and Rita Hermans*

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# Preface

*Hayden Lorimer*

Through the exercise of biography, landscape can be considered anew. An opening observation as bold as this demands some prefatory justification.

'Landscape biographies' might usefully be conceived of as an adaptive form of portraiture; personhood serving as the lens through which to view changes made to the natural or built environment, to its social purpose or cultural imagination. Pitched in these terms, portraiture performs broader duties than the standard depiction of an individual life as an arc of existence stretching from cradle to grave. Instead, it would attend carefully to a person's association with, or influence upon some identifiable place.

The orders of person who are influential in the shaping of place are as diverse in character as is topography in its forms. Operating as principal agents of landscape change, the biographical subject could be a mapper or a maker, architect or author, farmer or forester, traveller or tourist, interpreter or imaginer. They may be permanently resident, or on the move and simply passing through. She: a geo-engineer in the business of moving earth. He: a lyric poet whose words inscribe with a lightness of touch. But by a combination of actions and ideas, individual agency is attached or anchored, and a mark is made.

What does such a person leave? On occasion, evidence of authorship exists to such depth and degree, that landscape seems somehow fashioned in the author's own image. A kind of likeness between landscape and landscaper that is hard to ignore, and one narrated according to major standout features, judged posthumously as well worth remembering. Such strong biographical legacies can produce landscapes as ongoing, re-readable phenomena. Readability being a quality derived from direct experience, among those variously in search of a subject for artistic appreciation, a site of special scenic value, or exposed to endlessly recycled mediations in text and image. In other instances, past forms of landscape modification may be more minor, or the speed of transformation less dramatic, and thus individual interventions are gradually forgotten; until being rediscovered through the happy accidents or patient labours of formal research investigation.

And what of the places impacted by such active protagonists? This might be landscape conceived of at the smallest of scales, no more than

a patch or parcel of ground. Or, a landscape considerably greater in geographical extent: delimited according to cultural and ethnic traditions; a territory, whose extent can be charted along geo-political borders; or, what amounts to a scientific bioregion, understood in terms of floral and faunal particularity. And so, a sense gradually emerges of landscape as a phenomenon that can easily exceed the stamp or signature of any one author.

Configuring the relation between biography and landscape in these greater terms is, by implication, to acknowledge a different measure for existence in the living world. A 'biography of landscape' can long outlast the span of a single human life. Landscapes can be understood to have a biography that has accumulated across centuries, or aggregated over millennia. This stretched temporality is significant, and in tandem with it, the researcher's attunement to the multivariate agencies that co-produce landscape. Generosity shown to the 'more-than-human' demands a certain pliability of thinking, not only about the kinds of lives that might be subject to study, but also about what can be recovered of a life. The results can be generative and liberating: presencing the lifeworlds of animals and birds, plants and trees, objects and structures, and many other "beings" besides these. By the application of close and careful attention, each can be said to have a life history (not simply as a species or a multitude) but as individualized biographical subjects.

Both of these kinds of portraiture – 'landscape biographies' and 'biographies of landscape' – have their play in this excellent book. Its contents are an occasion for convening – critically and creatively – around interests shared by geographers, historians, archaeologists and anthropologists. In the recognition of authorial difference, one further twist on portraiture is made possible. This is to question the rightful register and pitch for authorial voice in landscape studies. Should it be detached, as academic tradition demands? Or reflexively embedded and enfolded inside the narrative? If so, then what style should we determine as most effective? Circumstances prevail, of course. And a spectrum exists, running all the way from explicit reportage to the recessed, spectral presence that speaks of literary invention.

As this volume's contributors make plain, landscape studies continue to have the great merit of being a genuinely interdisciplinary area of scholarship. The field methods, and interpretive techniques, employed by practitioners in a range of terrestrial and archival settings may well reflect intellectual differences in disciplinary history and contemporary theory, sometimes to quite categorical degree. But here evident are also

areas of significant overlap and real rapport, suggesting how ideas about the relation between landscape and biography are sharpened through the company they keep. Moreover, as this collection of chapters so ably demonstrates, tensions between disciplinary traditions need not be overcome. Instead, a trade in sensibilities and mentalities is enabled. Landscape is, above all, a subject that demands the skills and appetite of the polymath.

*Hayden Lorimer, University of Glasgow*  
*December 2013*





# 1 Landscape Biographies: Key Issues

*Jan Kolen & Johannes Renes*

## **Abstract**

This chapter introduces landscape biography to the reader. The first part explains the rationale for the approach taken. From an academic point of view, landscape biography is a reaction to the increasing reductionism in landscape research, as well as to the growing divide between objectivist and constructivist approaches to landscape. From a societal perspective, landscape biography aims at a better integration of historical landscape research with urban planning, landscape design, and public participation in local and regional developments. This chapter then presents a concise overview of biographical approaches to landscape in human geography, social anthropology and landscape archaeology from 1979 to the present. The chapter next gives a rough outline of the concept of 'landscape' as it will be explored throughout the volume: the differentiated life world of human and non-human beings. This life world and its dwellers create and 'reshape' each other in one continuous movement, weaving individual life cycles into long-term histories. The final part introduces the issues that are of major importance for the further development of landscape research along these lines. These are formulated as research questions: (1) who (or what) are the authors of the landscape?; (2) are landscapes 'socialized nature'?; (3) how does the temporal dimension of landscapes take 'shape' in rhythms, transformations, layers and memories?; and (4) how can planning and design contribute to the landscape's life history?

**Keywords:** landscape, landscape research, life history approaches, landscape biography, cultural biography

## **Introduction**

As an essential part of human life worlds, landscapes have the potential to absorb something of people's lives, works and thoughts. But landscapes also shape their own life histories on different timescales, imprinted by human existence, affecting personal lives and transcending individual human life cycles. This combination of reciprocity and distinctness creates a strong but complex intertwining of personhood and place – an intertwining which

most people become aware of during their own lifetime. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the 'co-scripting' of landscapes and people figures prominently in literature, autobiographies and academic research, as well as in our personal memories, reflections and conversations.

In recent years the relationships between the life histories of landscapes and people have also attracted the interest of geographers, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and designers. This has resulted in new approaches to landscape history, under the title of 'landscape biography', and which are rapidly gaining popularity. So far, however, these approaches have remained limited to the work of specific groups of researchers operating in relative isolation in North America, the UK and the Low Countries. To make further progress, concepts and experiences must be discussed by a wider community. One way to do this would be to organize debates and sessions at international conferences. A good example is the Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape (PECSRL), a series of bi-annual conferences which started in 1957 and which has always been open to new developments in landscape studies (Helmfrid, 2004). At the 2010 PECSRL conference, held in Riga and Liepaja (Latvia) under the title 'Living in Landscapes', a separate session on biographical approaches to landscape was organized by the editors of this volume, both to facilitate the exchange of experiences and research, and to gather fresh insights and ideas that may help the further development of these approaches.

The papers presented at this session in Latvia form the foundation of this book, which presents a number of studies under the common label of 'landscape biographies'. The biography concept has become an important influence in archaeology (although not without problems, see Joy, 2009) and in landscape studies over the last fifteen years. In landscape studies in particular it has generated broad interest and became an umbrella for a number of ideas, case studies and research projects that have reshaped historic landscape studies in recent years (see Bloemers *et al.*, 2010 for a regional example). This has formed the basis for new courses in academic education, for example the master course 'The Biography of Landscape' developed jointly by two universities in Amsterdam (VU University Amsterdam and University of Amsterdam), which has attracted students from other Dutch universities with a background in archaeology, geography, (architectural) history and heritage studies.

One of the reasons for the popularity of the biography concept was that it tackled a number of problems in landscape research which were diagnosed during the 1990s. The first of these was the increased subdivision of the field

into a large number of highly specialized and sometimes even 'esoteric' branches. Archaeologists, historical geographers, architectural historians, urban morphologists, cultural historians and historical ecologists all studied aspects or parts of our historic environment, often without much exchange and collaboration. Moreover, some of the disciplines themselves were divided further into period specializations. Historical geographers gradually moved away from the Middle Ages to focus on Early Modern and Modern landscapes. Archaeologists learned their trade in university departments that usually specialized in only one period, such as later prehistory or the Roman period. As a result of this ongoing subdivision (though it still was – and is – successful from the reductionist's point of view), the longer-term histories of places and the rich interrelationships between the social and natural dimensions of landscapes were pushed to the background of research, interpretation and intellectual reflection. The reductionist approach to landscape also appeared to fit societal interest in environmental issues less and less. The majority of archaeologists, geographers, architects and heritage students had jobs in which their focus was on entire towns or regions and not on specific features, disciplines or time periods.

Another problem was the difficult connection between landscape research and planning. Formalized historic landscape assessments, containing detailed information on a large number of fossilized landscape features and sites, often proved unappealing to the urban planners, landscape designers, policymakers and public interest groups which actively contributed to the further development of landscapes and regions, including their heritage (Fairclough & Møller, 2008; Janssen *et al.*, 2014; Riesto, this volume; Renes, this volume; Sooväli-Sepping, this volume). There was a demand for more vital approaches offering new possibilities for narrative, experience, collaboration and design. Although traditional landscape typologies and heritage assessments are still the backbone of many heritage policies, most stakeholders see them as limiting their possibilities and creativity rather than providing inspiration.

Landscape research has gone through several turbulent decades and is searching for new orientations. During the 1960s and 1970s, the old holistic landscape approaches of cultural geography gave way to ever more advanced theories and models for spatial analysis and cross-cultural comparison, following the quantitative and statistical paradigm that was developed within the 'new' human geography and the 'new' processual archaeology. The new approaches, however, treated humans as little more than anonymous particles and statistical factors. From the end of the 1970s reactions arose, first within 'humanistic' geography and later, from the early

1980s, within the 'new' cultural geography. One of the benchmark works for the humanistic approach was a collection of essays, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (Meinig, 1979). This collection contained an elegant paper by Marwyn Samuels on 'The Biography of Landscape', introducing the metaphor to human geography. With the term 'biography' Samuels referred to the particular role of individuals in the shaping of landscapes. In the same collection, Meinig showed that landscape was 'in the eye of the beholder' and, therefore, visions of landscape always revealed the fascinations, interests and ambitions of the perceiver.

This last point was extended some years later in the new cultural geography developed by Cosgrove and others (Cosgrove, 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988). Early examples of this direction introduced a Marxist emphasis on power relations and symbolic representations into landscape studies. Another source of inspiration came from art history and literary critique, which particularly led to Cosgrove's notions of landscape as a way of seeing and as a text. Later, a new generation of cultural geographers was inspired by the rich debate in the social sciences during the 1970s and 1980s.

In the early 1990s, research in the Anglo-Saxon academic world moved increasingly towards the study of landscapes as social and symbolic constructions. At the same time, however, large numbers of regional landscape studies, partly related to planning, continued to describe and map landscapes in traditional ways. The gap between these different worlds of research seemed unbridgeable and kept growing, leading to frustrations at over-theorizing in geographical and archaeological landscape research (see Fleming, 2007 and Johnson, 2007b for an example of the controversy). In 1996, the Danish-American geographer Kenneth Olwig tried to synthesize the two traditions using a thorough investigation of the origins of the landscape concept, by re-introducing the 'substantive' nature of landscape (Olwig, 1996, 2002). Although such a synthesis of paradigms – if possible at all (as it opposes the idea of paradigms itself) – is not an explicit goal of biographical approaches of landscape, there is certainly a link between these approaches and Olwig's endeavour, as will become apparent from the chapters in this book.

In the following we will briefly outline the conceptual frameworks within which the debate on and the further development of landscape biographies takes place. First, we discuss the attitude towards landscape adopted by this book. Second, we present a concise 'life history' of the concept of landscape biography until the present. This is followed by a more detailed section, which introduces the key issues and topics of the volume. These are formulated as research questions: who (or what) are the authors of the landscape?;

are landscapes ‘socialized nature’?; how does the temporal dimension of landscapes take ‘shape’ in rhythms, transformations, layers and memories?; and how can planning and design contribute to the landscape’s life history? Finally, in the last section, the structure of the book is explained.

### **Biographical Approaches of Landscape: A Short History**

Thirty-six years ago, the collection of essays entitled *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (Meinig, 1979) was published. The volume became a classic and is now seen as one of the most important testaments to humanistic geography. The volume included Marwyn Samuels’s essay ‘The biography of landscape’, in which he argues that landscapes are much more than the by-products of anonymous social, economic and demographic developments (Samuels, 1979). In a sense they are biographical accounts of the numerous individuals who have occupied, worked, shaped and dreamed them over time. Using some striking examples, such as New York and Shanghai, Samuels illustrates how named authors and ‘nobody in particular’ – as the unidentified, unnamed actor in historical studies is often treated – play a vital role in the making of landscapes as well as in our understanding of them.

So far Samuels’s ideas on the biography of landscape have implied a rather one-way system: people, mostly influential individuals and elites, leave a personal imprint on landscapes, thereby casting their life stories, so to speak, into a fixed, transferable form. But what about the other way round? An answer to this question can be found in Samuels’s distinction between ‘landscapes of impression’ and ‘landscapes of expression’. The former are landscape ideologies and representations of space and place, including planning concepts and landscape designs. They ultimately become the context in which landscapes are made, thus resulting in landscapes of expression. According to Samuels, the authorship and transformation of landscapes is always embedded in this overarching interaction and exchange between visions, plans and designs on the one hand and material landscapes and spatial (trans)formations on the other. This makes his view on landscapes also typically phenomenological. It starts from the assumption that landscapes are essentially *human* life worlds, and that people and their life worlds produce and transform each other in an ongoing dialectical movement.

Unfortunately, Samuels’s ideas on landscape biography have not been widely followed. Samuels himself has, in his later career, been little occupied with landscape, specializing instead in the geography and history

of China. It was only much later, in the 1990s, that his landscape concept was rediscovered by North American geographers and ecologists. This has resulted in a number of excellent studies of human-land interactions and micro-histories in wetlands. One example of this is Gomez's historical-ecological study of Louisiana's Chenier Plain, *A Wetland Biography* (1998).

Around the mid-1990s, the biography concept was reintroduced to the field of landscape research, this time through archaeology. Remarkably, this took place without any reference to the earlier experiments with the use of landscape biography in cultural geography during the 1980s. The archaeologists concerned were evidently unaware of the existence of Samuels's essay and of the North American studies of regions and biotopes based on his ideas. The archaeologists' inspiration came from an entirely different direction: the anthropological study of material culture. Of specific importance was a new collection of essays edited by Arjun Appadurai in 1986, *The Social Life of Things* (Appadurai, 1986). It also included an inspiring essay by Igor Kopytoff on the cultural biography of commodities and gifts (Kopytoff, 1986). Both Kopytoff and Appadurai used a biographical approach to describe the life histories of goods, including landed property and monuments, which are transmitted frequently within society and thereby undergo shifts in their values, meanings, functions and physical appearance. In the process these durable goods, landed properties and monuments not only string together the life histories of the individuals who contributed to them in some way, but they also create their own long life paths on different timescales through successive social contexts.

Their emphasis on the temporal dimension of material culture brought Appadurai's and Kopytoff's publications rapid popularity in archaeological circles, and it is therefore not surprising that a few years later the biographical concept could be found in archaeological studies of sites and monuments as well. Since then, biographical landscape studies have been conducted both in British and continental European archaeology. They focus predominantly on the changing use, ordering and experience of unique monuments through time, such as the biographical reconstructions of Avebury by Gillings and Pollard (1999; this volume; see also Pollard & Reynolds, 2002); of the prehistoric stone circles and archaeological sites near Evora in Portugal by Holtorf (2002; this volume); of prehistoric urn fields by Roymans (1995); and studies of the long life histories of megalithic monuments in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, and of a small medieval *Wüstung* (deserted settlement) in the German Rhineland by the first author (Kolen, 1993; Kolen, 1995; see also Holtorf, 1998; Pappmehl-Dufay, this volume). In all these cases the monuments' life histories are followed

up to the present day, and the actual archaeological research is itself also explicitly located in this long-term process of reshaping and revaluing places and landscapes (cf. Lemaire, 1997).

The Avebury Project of Gillings and Pollard, for example, made it clear that the stones of Avebury already had a history when they were placed in the stone circle during the Neolithic period. In later prehistory the stones continued to be important memorials, with human bones being placed in ditches in their immediate vicinity. The meanings of the stones and the entire monument changed significantly with the introduction of Christianity. Certain stones were torn down and buried in pits, presumably because they were deemed disruptive or threatening to Christian values. Gillings and Pollard further follow the life history of the monument through the re-discovery of Avebury by John Aubrey in the 1660s, through later conflicts between the early scientific community and farmers and landowners (with both pragmatic and superstitious ideas), through the growing popularity of New Age perspectives in the 1980s and 1990s, and through Gillings's and Pollard's own interpretations and attempts to evoke the ancient shapes of the monument using Geographical Information Systems.

In archaeological branches of landscape biography, and distinct from Samuels's earlier work, the concept of landscape itself remains rather ill-defined. The focus is predominantly on how sites, monuments and specific categories of landscape features have been transmitted, transformed and experienced, or just forgotten or removed through time. Less attention is paid to the reordering, reuse and changing experience of the landscapes in which they were situated. The archaeological studies are therefore concerned with the spatial and temporal complexities of specific *places* within the landscape, in relation to the ways in which subsequent human societies have structured their material worlds out of the many traces left by preceding generations.

Yet, there is another departure from Samuels's concept. The landscape biographies written by archaeologists show how successive generations have appropriated places and monuments of the past for their own purposes, and how they have incorporated these places and monuments into their social memories and their contemporary life worlds. Biographical approaches to landscape in archaeology therefore adopt a kind of double historical perspective, in the sense that they refer both to the drawn-out histories of places and monuments themselves and to the history of memories and practices that served to appropriate those places and monuments in new social and environmental settings. What makes things complex, of course, is that retrospective strategies of appropriation, as



derived from archaeological and historical indications for reuse, form the basic constituents of a progressive history of the places and monuments (cf. Bradley, 2002).

In Dutch research, the lack of a more integrated perspective on landscape in archaeology has encouraged the incorporation of landscape biography into a new, large-scale programme of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Bloemers *et al.*, 2011). This programme started in 2001 and involved several regional, interdisciplinary projects within which archaeologists, geographers and historians worked closely together. Within the framework of this programme, landscape biography is considerably extended (Kolen, 2005; in press; Roymans *et al.*, 2009), but it is also defined more explicitly. The main goal of regional studies along these lines is to explore how landscapes have been transmitted and reshaped from prehistory to the present, viewing landscape at each point in time as the interim outcome of a long-standing and complex interplay between agency, structure and process.

## Landscapes as Life Worlds

Gosden and Head (1994) once characterized landscape as a usefully ambiguous concept. The concept stands for both (part of) the outside world and for its representation or depiction in a two- or three-dimensional form – notably the painted landscapes that decorate our interiors. In our everyday usage, the term may refer to both a real spatial-physical entity (or a collection of spatial-physical entities), or – metaphorically – to an abstract totality, as in ‘the landscape of politics’. Over the last two centuries an increasing number of scientific disciplines have developed their own definition of landscape, ranging from the most solid rock formations of the geologist to the soft ‘layers of memory’ of the historian (Schema, 1995). All cultures experience what we call landscape in significantly different ways (Bender, 1993; Küchler, 1993; Hirsch & O’Hanlon, 1995), and even within Europe the words and concepts used for it vary from region to region. And to make this ambiguity even more complicated, virtually every human subject experiences the landscape in a unique way, colouring it with personal associations, memories and emotions, a fact of which social scientists – and indeed all of us – are well aware.

However, although the term landscape has always contained multiple meanings, its ambiguity increased rather late in the term’s own life history. During the Middle Ages, the words *landschap* (or *lantscap*), *landskab* and

*Landschaft* referred to the trinity of land, people and territory (Olwig, 1996), without a clear distinction between the constituent parts and without confusing ambiguities. The concepts at the same time stood for a group of people, the land that these people occupied and used collectively, and the territory that they marked off in this process as a shared political and institutional body.

With the emergence of landscape painting as a separate artistic *genre* around 1500 in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, and more specifically with the growing popularity of Flemish/Dutch landscape painting in the English art market from the early sixteenth century onwards, the word landscape gradually acquired the double and layered meaning which we still recognize today. "Landscape" stands for that part of the outside world that one can perceive from a particular point of view and its representation in a work of art (Ritter, 1963; Lemaire, 1970; Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988). Both art historians and geographers have described how, from the sixteenth century onwards, this ambiguity mobilized a continuous exchange between this outside world and representational world, with landscape painting becoming a measure for the design of 'real' landscapes, gardens and estates, and the 'picturesque' qualities of these landscapes being pictured, re-valued, reproduced and transformed in art, for example painting and photography.

In fact, the cover picture of the present volume illustrates this exchange quite well. It shows an early photograph of an urban landscape, 'het Kolkje' in Amsterdam around 1895, by the artist George Hendrik Breitner (1857-1923). Apart from the fact that Breitner intended to capture the landscape as a true 'lived-in' world of people, a concept to which we will return later, he took photographs as a source of inspiration for his paintings. These paintings followed their own life paths and in turn contributed to a canonical (but not undisputed) image of historical Amsterdam. And it is this canonical image, built up over a period of more than four centuries and represented by artistic icons which are carefully kept in museums and high status collections, that still motivates authorities to preserve and restore parts of the cityscape in particular ways. Olwig (1993) has coined the term 'semiotic shift' to describe and understand these complex interactive processes, and what happens when ideas, values and notions move back and forth between the reality of the physical landscape and the reality of representation and design.

With the Enlightenment and the growing importance of the natural sciences from the end of the eighteenth century, which also included the emergence of the science of geomorphology, one of the two basic meanings

Figure 1.1 Het Kolkje and the Oudezijds Achterburgwal in Amsterdam by George Hendrik Breitner, 1894-1898



Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

of landscape was isolated and objectified. Landscape became a set of real world phenomena: the landscape of geology, ecology and natural history, which had to be delineated sharply from the human and subjective. As an immense field of research, it had to be dissected into ever more and ever smaller parts, to be understood properly and analysed meticulously in terms of the laws of nature. By then, landscape was not only ambiguous, but also dualistic. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that twentieth-century geography produced countless alternatives to restore the unity of landscape, not only by reconnecting nature and culture, but also by including human experience.

As suggested by Gosden and Head, this volume intends to explore a productive ambiguity of landscape; yet it does so within certain limits. Although the authors of this volume conceptualize landscape slightly differently, they all approach landscapes as *life worlds*, in a sense – as the dwelt-in world of people and other animals and actors who co-create this world while living together. From a biographical perspective it is almost

self-evident to equate landscape with life world, although there is certainly some contamination in the term. In fact, the word 'world' on its own is or should be sufficient in this respect, as the Old English word *weorold*, like the Old Saxon *Werold*, Old High German *Weralt* (*Welt*) and Old Norse *verolt*, literally means 'age or life of man' (Oxford English Dictionary; Egberts, 2015).

Life world or *Lebenswelt* is a combined concept that comes from nineteenth-century life sciences but became particularly well known through the work of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1954 [1936]). It corresponds with the universal starting point of all phenomenological thinking, that is, the mutual implication of the human subject (or more generally: actor) and his or her world. Humans lead their lives in a world that is not ready-made. Although to a certain degree shaped by their environment, people contribute actively to their world by a continuous process of reshaping within the context of their thinking and acting, coming and going, in short, by living their 'everyday' lives. Following phenomenologists, this being shaped *by* the world, and presence and realization *within* and *through* the world, takes place in a dialectical movement. Also the mutual constituency postulated by Samuels – landscapes of expression and landscapes of impression – can be understood within this phenomenological meaning. Everyday has a particular connotation in this context. It cannot simply be translated as commonplace, daily or usual, as in a vernacular or ordinary landscape. Husserl defined *Lebenswelt* as the immediate (or original) experienced world, that precedes any scientific objectivation (cf. Husserl 1954, 130).

In the same way as differences are apparent in the general phenomenological orientation, phenomenologists have given different meanings to the living environment. Heidegger, for example, in his later works wrote about the central meaning of dwelling, that is, in his opinion, more than the shaping of a concrete place to settle, or the building and inhabiting of a house (Heidegger, 2000 [1951]). When people dwell, they turn their world into a home, an idea that was adopted in geography by Tuan (1974), among others, and which we can also find in Ingold's (1993) perspective on dwelling. Merleau-Ponty (2002 [1958]) again puts more emphasis on the constitution of humans as *corps-sujet*, a unit that neutralizes the Cartesian division between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. Through their physicality, humans are spontaneously familiar with the world, and that, according to Merleau-Ponty, forms the basis of the prescientific experience and of our perception of the environment. This last aspect can also be seen in landscape research that is inspired by the phenomenological tradition, as in Ingold's (1993) concept of 'taskscape'. But the first geographical approach in which the

protagonists collectively embraced the phenomenological legacy, including the concept of life world, was made by humanistic geography. It is therefore not surprising that this approach has sometimes been characterized as ‘phenomenological geography’.

According to all phenomenologists, the life world is inherently temporal, because humans and human existence are inherently temporal. For Husserl, time does not consist of a string of discrete ‘now-moments’, but instead past and future are held together in the life world by the present. Meinig (1979, 44) translated this topic to the temporal complexity of the landscape in a certain moment in time – a statement to which we will return later. The life world has, according to Husserl, the aspects of ‘retention’ and ‘protention’: the present retains the past, but also points ahead to what is still to come. Generally, in phenomenology much emphasis is given to the present and to the personal experience. That of course is a headache for landscape historians and means that landscape research – including landscape biography – cannot always be based uncritically on the ideas of philosophical phenomenology (Kolen, 2005, 11-18). Temporality unfolds in the interactions between different actors and their life worlds, on differing timescales, making the landscape a ‘process totalized’ (Kobayashi 1989).

Landscapes can also be justifiably conceptualized as life worlds, but are not exclusively the life worlds of *humans*, as Ingold convincingly argues (Ingold, 1993, 2000). Animals, other organisms, maybe even ‘animated’ objects and places (in specific cultural perceptions) or human-made technologies – all belong to the group of cohabiting actors that together make the landscape into a life world. This understanding has in recent years been the basis for a further extension of landscape research to ‘more-than-human’ approaches (e.g. Whatmore, 2006).

## Key Issues and Topics of this Volume

### Issue 1 – Who (or what) are the authors of the landscape?

The ‘authorship’ of landscapes has been one of the most prominent issues in all biographical approaches. Marwyn Samuels (1979) writes about the urban landscape of Manhattan as a prime example of what he calls ‘authored landscapes’. According to Samuels, it is impossible to separate the history and essence of the Manhattan landscape from the lives and works – and, for that matter, the ideals and ambitions – of influential figures such as Robert Moses, Louis Sullivan (the ‘father’ of the skyscraper) and J.P. Morgan, and of

prominent families such as the Rockefellers and the Harrimans. The famous urban planner Robert Moses and his spectacularly successful empire, the Triborough Authority, made such a deep impression on the modern history and design of New York City that the biographer Robert Caro devoted a 1000-page book to his 'urban authorship' and once described New York as a 'landscape by Moses' (Caro, 1974). Caro's biography of Moses is far from being a hagiography; he associates Robert Moses's role as the master builder of New York with the city's falling fortunes after the Second World War (see also Jacobs, 1961). At a time when New York was grappling with a financial crisis, new waves of immigrants, and rising criminality and racial conflict, Moses caused quite a stir with his costly, uncompromising building projects, protracted conflicts with residents' organizations, and repeated attempts to push a motorway through Lower Manhattan. It is only in recent years that the interweaving of Moses's life story with that of the city has been interpreted in subtler terms. Marwyn Samuels's short biographical analysis of Manhattan foreshadows this development. He has confined himself to the historical observation that a select group of politically influential entrepreneurs and planners made New York what it is today, and thereby linked their life stories with that of the city.

Directly at odds with Samuels's vision, we have the concept of authorship as put forward by the French historian and philosopher Michel de Certeau, whose book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, published in English in 1984, also contained an essay on the urban space of Manhattan (De Certeau, 1984, 91-110). De Certeau first examines the structure of Manhattan's urban tissue from a great height: the 110th floor of the World Trade Centre. From this perspective he logically considers the role of the 'authors' of public space. Who *are* they, anyway, and how do they contribute to the dynamic of urban life and space? In his view the influential authors of the city do not necessarily include urban planners and developers, whose abstract view of urban space and 'celestial eye' have turned them into voyeurs with little or no impact on the actual experience of the lived-through urban environment. To meet the *real* authors of the urban world we have to descend to street level and to the everyday life that takes place there. This is where we meet 'the ordinary practitioners', as De Certeau calls them, who actually move through the city and thereby embody a fundamental, spatial form of experience. He then continues by describing them as the *Wandersmänner*, 'the walkers whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it' (De Certeau, 1984, 93). Although De Certeau also employs textual metaphors to interpret the structure and dynamic of urban space, in point of fact these metaphors do

not do justice to the central thrust of this unconventional essay. He is more interested in the idea of the city as a locus of everyday life, what British researchers have called *embodied space*, than in the idea of urban space as 'text', and he is also more interested in people who are actively engaged in the continuous production of living space. We should therefore regard De Certeau's *Wandersmänner* first and foremost in terms of the well-known concept of *agency*.

De Certeau's analysis can be read as a critique of Samuels's biographical approach, although he makes no explicit reference to the latter's study. Unlike in Samuels's version, it is impossible to see De Certeau's Manhattan as the product of an influential elite of city administrators, urban planners and project developers, planning and directing the city 'from above' by intervening in the physical environment of the city's masses. From such a point of view, Samuels's biography of New York is not so much about *authorship*, but about *authority*. For De Certeau it is the masses themselves, acting as an unexpectedly differentiated, productive and creative force, who make the city. In this view urban space is given structure and meaning from below, as a result of the constant flow of daily activities and concerns of those who have adopted urban space – as residents, visitors and passers-by.

All the authors of this volume discuss the issue of authorship in depth, exploring the diverse relationships between the particular histories of places with the unique lives of people. Authorship of landscapes is not always considered harmonious, constructive or wished-for. Van der Laarse, for instance, highlights forms of authorship that we may feel uncomfortable with, as in the case of the terrascapes of World War II. Other contributions aim at extending our notion of authorship in other directions as well. How can we conceptualize, for instance, the role of technologies that have shaped or co-created landscapes, most notably when they cannot be separated from the identities of certain individuals or groups of people, for example, 4WDs in Iceland's uninhabited highlands (Huijbens and Benediktsson)? How do we judge influential writings and movies that have had a profound impact on the image of an entire city and by doing so act like influential authors who 'write' the urban landscape (Koren's essay about Shanghai), or stories and distinctive notions that stimulated people to 'shape' particular places in certain ways, both with their minds and bodies (Huijbens and Palsson)? What about persistent physical structures that 'work out' in people's spatial decisions (De Jong), or animals, plants and other 'natural' agents that actively shape the landscape – can they be considered as creative authors of landscapes as well? What is the role of authorship in landscapes that we conventionally perceive as 'natural', as human agents are supposed



to be entirely absent or in the background of such landscapes (Kolen and Purmer)? These and similar issues will be reflected upon in this volume.

## Issue 2 – Are landscapes ‘socialized nature’?

Throughout the twentieth century, landscape research has been dominated by the view that the cultural landscape has been created gradually from a yet unspoiled natural world. In this way of thinking, existing ‘natural landscapes’ – such as national parks in the United States and nature reserves in Europe – continue to reflect something of their original state. In places where this state can no longer be deciphered in the landscape, skilled landscape researchers are traditionally expected by virtue of their training, knowledge and observations to reveal the primordial landscape to the mind’s eye. The obstacles that they encounter were articulated clearly and unmistakably more than half a century ago by Hoskins in the first chapter of *The Making of the English Landscape*:

The historian, trying to enter into the minds of the first men to break into a virgin landscape, trying to envisage precisely what they saw and no more, is aware of some of the difficulties of his task, if not all. One needs to be a botanist, a physical geographer, and a naturalist, as well as an historian, to be able to feel certain that one has all the facts right before allowing the imagination to play over the small details of a scene. For unless the facts are right there is no pleasure in this imaginative game, if we clothe the landscape with the wrong kind of trees, or allow in it plants and birds that are really only the product of some recent changes, or if we fail to observe that the river changed its course well within historic times. We may have to make all sorts of allowances – subtracting here and adding there – before the natural landscape, still untouched by man, is recovered in all its purity and freshness (Hoskins, 1970 (1955), 18-19).

Here Hoskins is describing one of the most ambitious landscape research projects of the past century: empirically ‘capturing’ the last primordial landscape from the stream of historical landscape images and reconstructions. This endeavour was especially well developed among German geographers, who early last century focused on the study of *Urlandschaften*. The term *Urlandschaft* is familiar to us mainly through the work of German parish priest and geographer Robert Gradmann (Jäger, 1973). It refers to landscape in its ‘pristine’ state, and specifically in the period immediately before the earliest human presence. The *Urlandschaft* thus marks the end of the pure,



natural landscape, even though certain of its features, such as soil structure, at times left their mark for long afterwards on the way in which human communities used space. Even probabilists such as Vidal de la Blache and Sauer did not question the notion that the cultural landscape was formed on and from an unspoiled natural landscape. According to Sauer, the earliest 'interface' between the two was the subtle way in which hunter-gatherers influenced vegetations (Sauer, 1963 (1925), 345). This shows that for Sauer, the natural foundation did not simply determine one-sidedly the human uses of the landscape. In his view, cultures work with and upon nature to create a cultural landscape that is then the material expression of specific cultural processes.

The idea of a primordial landscape, and hence the corresponding idea of a 'secondary' cultural landscape, could be characterized as objectivist (or naturalist) in many respects. It entails a view of the primordial landscape as essentially a-cultural and a-human and of the cultural landscape as its opposite. By definition, the primordial landscape is also seen as essentially extra-cognitive (as it is external to humanity), yet knowable to the landscape scientist who is trained to skilfully translate value-free sense data into reliable reconstructions. Finally, the idea of a primordial nature is exclusivist in that it clearly and carefully separates the human from the natural.

To uncover the basic assumptions behind this opposition between nature and culture, Tim Ingold, the anthropologist, digs deep into the layers of environmental classification (Ingold, 2000, 172-188). He asks by what right we place the artificial aspect of environments on the same footing as the human. This question concerns the debate about the human-animal boundary. Biogeographers, ethologists and primatologists have all extensively documented how animals exert a demonstrable influence on their environment (e.g. Pallasmaa, 1995). They produce their 'own' landscapes and also create architecture, for example, the carton nests of common wasps, the richly decorated courts of bowerbirds and the dam-pools and logs of beavers, to mention just a few well-known examples. And yet in the case of animal populations, we never speak of a cultural landscape and seldom of a built environment, a fact which has not gone unnoticed by geographers. 'Compared with the termite's skyscraper', Tuan notes, 'the ... shelters of human beings look crude. If humans nonetheless claim a certain superiority, the claim must rest on grounds other than architectural achievement' (Tuan, 1977, 102). One argument put forward for a fundamental distinction between human and animal environments is that only humans both consciously design and execute their architecture, whereas non-human animals are merely

the *executors* of a design passed down via genetic pathways or natural selection, in other words by something outside themselves. According to Ingold, however, there are insurmountable objections to this view:

The beaver ... inhabits an environment that has been decisively modified by the labours of its forebears, ... and will in turn contribute to the fashioning of an environment for its progeny. It is in such a modified environment that the beaver's own bodily orientations and patterns of activity undergo development. The same goes for human beings. [They] grow up in environments furnished by the work of previous generations, and as they do so they come literally to carry the forms of their dwelling in their bodies – in specific skills, sensibilities and dispositions. But they do not carry them in their genes, nor is it necessary to invoke some other kind of vehicle for the intergenerational transmission of information – cultural rather than genetic – to account for the diversity of human living arrangements (Ingold, 2000, 175).

With the fading of the distinction between animal and human environments, the line between a primordial nature and a 'derived' cultural landscape also becomes blurred. Most anthropologists, geographers and archaeologists would now agree that the nature/culture distinction is part and parcel of the modern worldview (Palsson, 2011; see also Gregory, 2000).

Much of the critical thinking about the nature/culture divide in geography and history is inspired by the paradigmatic writings of geographers such as Cronon (1996) and Castree (2005). Castree elaborates how nature has come to refer to a whole range of things (for example, bodies, birds and rocks), values, ideas (for example, the order of things), and essences (for example, historical origins and authenticity), and how these have invariably been used to legitimize all kinds of social strategies and political convictions (Castree, 2005). Before Castree, Cronon had already launched a frontal attack on the dualistic understanding of nature and culture by analysing the Western fascination with wilderness. More than any other category, wilderness represents nature in its purest form: other, sublime, devoid of any human interference and, therefore, entirely opposed to culture. Grounded in the Romantic re-evaluation of untamed nature in the arts and sciences, the concept developed into a true religion thanks to the works and performances of influential figures such as Goethe, Wordsworth, Rousseau, Ruskin, Friedrich, Thoreau and Muir. Thus, for instance, John Muir declared when arriving in the Sierra Nevada in 1869: 'No description of Heaven that I have ever heard or read seems half so fine' (cited in Cronon, 1996, 3).

Later, in the second half of the twentieth century, the religious diffusion of the wilderness concept became evident in movements such as 'deep ecology'. Yet despite its importance for Western thinking about nature and Western environmentalism, Cronon concludes that wilderness is 'entirely the creation of the culture that holds it dear' (Cronon, 1996).

It is (moderate) constructivists like Cronon and Castree who have convincingly argued that the notion of a primordial landscape or self-evident nature is unjustified. Still, we must be wary of falling into the trap of a radical constructivism, one which ultimately reduces all nature to human proportions, to the sum of our cultural notions – to a set of *ideas*. A constructivist view of landscape, which allows no room for human-nature interactions and for landscape as a 'real world' phenomenon is just as undesirable as an essentialist nature that supposedly exists entirely outside culture. We should therefore ask ourselves whether it is possible to envision landscapes, including their authorship, so as to circumvent the dualism between nature and culture. This issue is taken up in various contributions to this volume, from various disciplinary angles and different theoretical perspectives, most notably by Huijbens and Palsson, Kolen, Huijbens and Benediktsson, Purmer, and Van der Laarse.

### **Issue 3 – How does the temporal dimension of landscapes take 'shape' in rhythms, layers and memories?**

Landscapes have their own temporalities and rhythms, in relation to but distinct from individual human life cycles. It seems evident, therefore, that 'time', and more particularly 'lifetime', should be considered the core business of landscape biography. Nevertheless, archaeologists, historical geographers and historians have hardly dealt with the specific temporal properties of landscapes beyond such terms as dating, chronology and organic development (see Ingold, 1993 for a critique).

One of the first to tackle time in archaeology was Geoff Bailey (1983), who not only argued that time deserved a better place in archaeological practice and theory, but also offered concrete suggestions for making an archaeological contribution to the handling of time within the historical sciences in general. He delineated two main topics. The first concerns the connection between past perceptions of time on the one hand, and the archaeologist's time perception(s) on the other. Secondly, he discussed the possibility of further developing the theory of timescales, suggesting that archaeology's specific contribution to the history of societies and landscapes resides in the long term – the *longue durée* of Fernand Braudel.

Braudel's great work on the Mediterranean (Braudel, 1975 [1949]) gave rise to a series of important studies on the long-term development of landscape and society in that and other regions (e.g. Barker, 1995), in which, however, the methodological problems defined by Braudel, such as the interaction between timescales (*événements*, *conjonctures* and the *longue durée*), remained largely untouched (but see Moreland, 1992).

In the 1990s, landscape theory gradually moved away from such issues, as the growing emphasis on social construction inspired scholars to adopt 'anthropological' concepts of time as well. Using insights from philosophy (phenomenology and hermeneutics) and cultural geography, and exploring a growing body of ethnographic literature on memory (see Stewart and Strathern, 2003 for examples), archaeologists such as Chris Tilley, Julian Thomas and Richard Bradley shifted to time as experienced 'from within'; that is, the constitution of memories and the experience of time within the horizons of past life worlds (e.g. Jones, 2007). In this way, they did a service to archaeological interpretation, as past experiences of time and place had formed a hidden and unexplored dimension of archaeological study thus far. On the other hand, the ethnographic focus within cultural geography and post-processual landscape archaeology has made the long term almost unattainable, thereby reducing the time depth of landscape studies considerably.

In the meantime, memory had also replaced 'long-stretched' time in the discourse on landscape as heritage. In this respect landscape archaeology is rather late in comparison with geographical and anthropological studies of heritage and landscape. As early as the 1980s, for example, Cosgrove and Daniels (1988, 13) stated that 'landscape is often regarded as the materialization of memory, fixing social and individual histories in space ... Human memory constructs rather than retrieves, and the past thus originates from the elaboration of cultural memory, which itself is socially constructed'. However, it seems that it is now time for 'time' to return to the agenda of landscape research in other ways than as a constructivist notion of memory. Landscapes contain traces which are forgotten, repressed by collective memory or traces of events that were never intended to be remembered – traces, moreover, that led part of their lives outside the sphere of human intentions and cultural transmission, remaining unacknowledged in the soil under our feet. '[T]he landscape tells – or rather *is* – a story,' says Ingold (2000, 189), 'a chronicle of life and dwelling.' He continues: 'It unfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not

so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past.' It is inevitable that this role lends some authority to the work of the landscape historian: 'It is ... part of an archaeological training to learn to attend to those clues which the rest of us might pass over (literally, when they are below the surface), and which make it possible to tell a fuller or richer story' (Ingold 2000, 199). Current landscape studies are thus facing the challenge of reloading heritage practices with time depth and new notions of time and temporality.

Biographical approaches to landscapes and places seem promising in this respect. They may be able to link social memories to the long term, connecting the micro-histories of places to large-scale developments (Hupperetz, this volume), and integrating experience and process. One of the routes to this end is the study of how, in different mnemonic, religious and social systems, memories and the biographies of values and ideas (Hoskins, 1998) interact with the material world (e.g. Kuchler, 2002). These systems may, in fact, include very different modes of transformation and cultural transmission (cf. Rowlands, 1993; Whitehouse, 2004), each mode exhibiting distinct temporal characteristics on different timescales. Moreover, different mnemonic systems may even generate quite different processes of environmental and ecological change. On New Ireland, for example, rituals and life-cycle ceremonies that involve the frequent destruction of objects and land features, such as *malanggan* grave sculptures, dwellings and garden plots, create diverse environments that change rapidly, in both social and ecological respects (Kuchler, 1993; 2002). Indeed, Kuchler concludes, the process of landscape formation and its articulation in ritual and visual representations is inseparable from the emergence of a political economy of memory under specific social and historical conditions (Kuchler, 1993, 104). This indicates that landscape historians should conduct more research on the interactions between mnemonic systems, values and perceived time on the one hand, and environmental rhythms and ecological changes on the other. In doing so, they should take up the challenge of linking the ethnographically observed temporalities with the *longue durée* (e.g. Ingold, 2000). New theoretical perspectives and detailed empirical studies of landscapes and places could improve our understanding of how landscapes came to be, and how they may change in the future.

The temporality of landscapes not only unfolds over time. The past is also always present in the landscape of 'today'. All landscapes, Meinig once reminded us, incorporate 'one aspect of which is so pervasive as

to be easily overlooked: the powerful fact that life must be lived amidst that which was made before' (Meinig, 1979: 44). For as long as archaeologists and historians have been able to make reconstructions, societies have always been fascinated by material things in their environment which they knew, or intuitively sensed, had survived many generations. Old 'layers' were reworked continuously, lending processes of landscape formation a non-linear character (Renes, this volume). Choices were made both consciously and unconsciously, and remembering, forgetting and anticipating have all been formative principles in the organization of the lived environment. In this sense, as stated earlier, landscape is a process totalized, a work-in-progress and a collection of human activity in a material setting which includes both its history and its potential (Kobayashi, 1989).

#### **Issue 4 – How can planning and design contribute to the landscape's life history?**

As already mentioned, the approach of landscape biography is partly a reaction to developments in society, especially on the growing – and at the same time ever more differentiated and dynamic – relations with landscape as heritage. From the early nineteenth century, the emerging European nation states developed a large corpus of laws, treaties and formal institutions to protect and transfer to the next generation their inalienable antiquities, historic buildings and landscapes. The care for these 'monuments' of history, nature and culture was seen as a necessary counterweight to modernization and industrialization. The care for heritage developed in most European countries – and in countries outside Europe – into a more or less closed system. Elite groups of highly educated experts determined what was valuable enough to protect for future generations. The interested public consisted mainly of connoisseurs. The world of protection of ancient monuments and natural sites was characterized by a 'culture of loss'. Their prime motive was an anxiety over losing valuable objects, buildings, landscapes and traditions – in fact, of the core values of culture itself. The result was a constant fight against violation and decay, which were, particularly after World War II, caused by rapid urbanization of the countryside and modernization of city centres.

It is only in recent decades that this situation has started to change. Society requires different tasks from heritage, making more dynamic solutions necessary. Urban and rural heritage is ever more a 'driver' for socio-economic and spatial developments, such as cultural tourism and

recreation ('leisure landscapes'), the creative industry and the shaping of urban regions. Although landscape and heritage almost by definition entail conflicts of interest, these new developments make them accessible for a growing group of interested people. Nowadays, the heritage sector is more characterized by a 'culture of profit'. The sector (perhaps even overconfidently) leaves the old fear of loss and degradation behind.

The growing societal interest in heritage has been noticed by designers and planners of town and countryside. Already before 1990, plans were designed in several European countries to integrate historic buildings and old (industrial) landscapes into new spatial developments and interventions. *Internationale Bauaustellung* (International Building Exhibition) Emscher Park in the German Ruhr Area is a benchmark example. This extensive redevelopment programme, started in 1989, comprised more than 120 projects for reuse and redevelopment of industrial heritage, focusing on themes such as tourism, recreation, quality of the living environment, creative economy and ecology. It was concluded in 1999 and attracts half a million visitors per year.

In other countries as well, including England, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy, *lieux de mémoire*, monuments and other types of cultural heritage are used as tools to revitalize landscapes and urban space (Braae, 2003; Tietjen, 2007; Fairclough & Møller, 2008; Janssen *et al.*, 2014; Riesto, this volume;). Huge old factory buildings and even extensive industrial landscapes occupy a central position in many plans. Such buildings and landscapes had lost their industrial functions during the 1970s and 1980s, but were later able to profit from the growing public interest in the industrial past (Van Veldhoven, this volume).

These shifts in public appreciation demand new approaches that link knowledge of the past to contemporary issues such as sustainable development, social identification and quality of life. Biographical approaches of landscape can contribute to this, without uncritically justifying all changes that are proposed by politicians, planners and designers. The aim must be to bring insights into historical processes, historical narratives and memories to the relevant actors, so that old landscapes can be transformed from vulnerable landscapes into socially vital and resilient landscapes. Several chapters in this volume therefore focus on the question of whether – and how – planning and design can contribute to the landscape's life history, more particularly when inspired by landscape biographies (Riesto, Renes, Sooväli-Sepping). Attention is also given to the relations and interactions between the historic landscape and past architecture and planning (De Jong, among others).



## The Structure of the Book

All chapters of this book deal with a combination of the topics discussed above. However, they are arranged in such a way that it is most logical to read the chapters in numerical order, using one, in a sense, as an introduction to the next. Chapters 2 through 4 discuss the issue of authorship of landscapes, with specific reference to landscapes that we conventionally perceive as 'natural'. In these landscapes human agents are supposedly absent or in the background of landscape change, as in the bogs and highlands of Iceland, the Manhattan landscape in around 1600 (that is, just before Henry Hudson's crew landed there in 1607), and the fens and peat moors of the southern Netherlands. Chapters 5 to 7 explore the long-stretched life histories of prehistoric monuments in the landscape (Avebury, Öland, Evora), including their antiquarian discovery, the history of their archaeological research and their present-day uses and meanings. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with estates (Eerde and King William's Het Loo), where 'quiet authors' and subtle interventions in gardens and nature were often more important for the landscape's transmission than the influential and prominent authors indicated by Samuels. Chapters 10 to 13 are about urban landscapes (Manhattan, Shanghai, but also the provincial cities of Utrecht and Breda in the Netherlands), exploring the continuous interactions between what Samuels calls landscapes of impression and landscapes of expression. The role of memory in the construction and reshaping of landscapes – even into real 'landscapes of memory' (Dutch and Belgian Limburg) and 'traumascapes' (Nazi Germany) – is the central issue of Chapters 14 and 15. Finally, Chapters 16 through 18 dig deeper into the present spatial articulations of landscape biographies, such as the 'layeredness' of landscapes, using examples such as the Carlsberg Breweries in Copenhagen, Rome and the rural landscape of Estonia. These chapters furthermore discuss the potential values of landscape biography for urban planning, landscape design and regional development.

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## 2 The Marsh of Modernity

The Bog in our Brains and Bowels<sup>1</sup>

*Edward H. Huijbens & Gisli Palsson*

### **Abstract**

Wetlands occur practically everywhere, on every continent, in every zone and biome, in all shapes and sizes. Despite their massive scale, they have usually remained marginal in social discourse. This is reflected in the fact that in only a century humans have reduced global wetland areas by 50%, in the name of modernization and progress, without much concern or debate. Towards the end of the 20th century, however, wetland areas began to be recognized as constituting some of the most sensitive and useful areas on Earth. This chapter focuses on the social history and understandings of wetlands in Iceland. Through literature reviews, map analysis and field work in four wetland areas in Iceland, the research here presented aims at linking current environmental discourse with wetlands and how they have been understood and dealt with through history. The conclusion is that nature is increasingly being remade through technology, becoming more and more made by and through human activities. This fact is becoming ever more pertinent with current issues of climate change. Therefore attention has to be paid to the analysis of the perceptions, attitudes, and relations of those who are in close contact with nature in order to unravel this constitution. This chapter seeks to contribute this type of analysis in terms of wetlands, a key climate change indicator.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, Iceland, landscapes, wetlands, modernism

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## Introduction

Nature is unruly, continually causing problems through flooded rivers and perfect storms and, of course, receding glaciers and global warming. In the modernist language of mainstream ecology, things spin out of control, beyond steady states and tipping points. While some of these events may be less surprising than they used to be, they often pose spectacular problems for human society and, as a result, demand close attention and concerted action. Wetlands have repeatedly provided apt examples, refusing to “behave”. Representing a substantial part of the earth’s land surface (about 6%), wetlands occur practically everywhere, on every continent (except Antarctica), in every zone and biome, in all shapes and sizes. Two wetland areas are in excess of 1 million km<sup>2</sup>, seven are in the order of 100.000 to 400.000 km<sup>2</sup>, other wetland areas are smaller. Despite their massive scale, wetlands have usually remained marginal or liminal in social discourse. This is reflected in the fact that in only a century humans have reduced global wetland areas by 50% (Fraser & Keddy, 2005, p. 448), without much discussion. Towards the end of the 20th century, however, wetland areas began to be recognized as constituting some of the most sensitive and useful areas on Earth. Focusing on Iceland, this chapter discusses the social history and understanding of wetlands (for the comparative literature on wetlands, see e.g. Giblett, 1996; Strang, 2005).

In an attempt to move beyond modernist definitions of ecosystems highlighting linearity and equilibria, the ecologists Fikret Berkes and Carl Folke suggest a definition which ‘emphasizes conditions in which disturbances (or perturbations) can flip a system from one equilibrium state to another. In this case, the important measure of resilience is the magnitude or scale of *disturbance that can be absorbed* before the system changes in structure by the change of variables and processes that control system behaviour’ (Berkes & Folke, 1998, p. 12; for a fuller discussion see: Hastrup, 2009). While such a definition in terms of systemic states is still somewhat modernist, it does allow for uncertainty and fleeting boundaries. One thing to note is precisely the openness and relativity of any demarcation of environmental systems. After all, environmental interactions and ecological processes usually eschew geographical confinement and, inevitably, systemic boundaries are somewhat arbitrarily defined for specific human purposes rather than ‘written’ in the organic world. Not only are the boundaries of ecosystems relative, depending on the scale of action and observation, but they also stretch across both natural and social space, conflating the key terms of dualist, modernist thought

(Descola & Palsson, 1996; Palsson, 2006). Once seen as entirely beyond the human domain, climate is now known to become increasingly artificial, a byproduct of human activities. The floods in the wake of hurricane Katrina, partly at least the result of human engagement with the marshes of Louisiana, is a case in point. Any discussion of wetlands, we suggest, and of environmental issues more generally, needs to move beyond narrow definitions of the ecosystem, taking into account the mutual interdependence of human activities and the communities and environments in which they are embedded.

### Nature as We Know It

Etymologically derived from the words *natura* ('the course of things') and *nascere* ('to be born'), the concept of 'nature' is a product of Latin translations of the Greek word *physis*. Usually 'nature' (and the 'environment') has connoted that which is given from birth or independent of human activities. Nature, then, is often presented as one half of a pair – nature/culture, the natural/the social – in opposition to the 'artificial' products of human labour. Highlighting such distinction, the ecosystem approach increasingly seems analytically restrictive and conceptually problematic, although early on it represented important advances. For one thing, it tends to relegate human perception and social discourse to the margin.

Attempting to redress the balance, in the context of wetlands research, the anthropologist Veronica Strang (2005) suggests, drawing upon phenomenological approaches emphasizing direct perception, that while human sensory and perceptual engagements with water are necessarily informed by particular 'cultural landscapes and engagements with water', it seems that human bodily experience of water exhibits many common characteristics:

Common human physiological and cognitive processes provide sufficient experiential continuity to generate common undercurrents of meaning. These undercurrents persist over time and space – inter-generationally and inter-culturally (Strang, 2005, p. 115).

We would argue, along with Strang, that the experience of water and wetlands poses similar challenges and opportunities for humans irrespective of culture and context. Arguably, however, the global environmental crisis presents unprecedented challenges to human cognition and discourse. Some of these challenges relate to the limits of direct perception and



our inevitable reliance on virtual representations: as the environmental historian William Cronon (1996, p. 47) notes,

Some of the most dramatic environmental problems we appear to be facing ... exist mainly as simulated representations in complex computer models of natural systems. Our awareness of the ozone hole over the Antarctic, for instance, depends very much on the ability of machines to process large amounts of data to produce maps of atmospheric phenomena that we ourselves could never witness at first hand. No one has ever seen the ozone hole. However real the problem may be, our knowledge of it cannot help being virtual.

Another challenge to those concerned with the environment relates to the non-modern or 'postmodern' recognition that observers of the environmental crisis and the languages available to them are necessarily embedded in the world they observe. The critical interrogation by the humanities and the social sciences of central concepts in current environmental debates is essential; without it, there would be no way of knowing whether we are on the 'right' track. While it is easy, however, to dismiss the virtualism of climate discourse as just one more social construction, postmodern critique is sometimes paralyzing and beside the point.

The scale of the environmental crisis and its global connections demands new kinds of social institutions and communities, robust and flexible enough to generate the necessary trust and cooperation. The demarcation of the environment as a domain for human concerns and coordination implies, it seems, new kinds of socialities and citizenship. As the anthropologist Bruno Latour emphasizes, the global-warming controversy demands a new and hybrid kind of politics: 'The sharp difference that seemed so important between those who represent things and those who represent people has simply vanished' (2003, p. 33) with the imbrications of nature with the distinct sphere consisting 'of a specific sort of phenomenon variously called "society", "social order", "social practice", "social dimension", or "social structure"' (Latour, 2005, p. 3). One innovative perspective in this vein is that of the political scientist Arun Agrawal (2005, p. 8) who proposes the framework of *environmentality*, combining the notions of *environment* and *governmentality* to develop 'an approach to studying environmental politics that takes seriously the conceptual building blocks of power/knowledges, institutions, and subjectivities'. The global nature of many environmental problems not only poses difficulties for mitigation, it also presents particular methodological problems for environmental researchers. As a consequence,

in recent years, a growing emphasis has been placed on the mutuality of the centre and periphery, with humanities scholars and social scientists increasingly advocating multi-sited fieldwork. Thus, in her discussion of environmental change in Indonesia the anthropologist Anna L. Tsing focuses on a series of sites – among NGOs, peasants, politicians, scientists, etc. – exploring ‘the productive friction of global connections’ (2005, p. 3). As the geographer Doreen Massey (2005, p. 163) states ‘There are no rules of space and place’.

### Mapping the Marsh

A manifestation of the imbrications of nature with the distinct spheres of ‘society’, ‘social order’, ‘social practice’, ‘social dimension’, or ‘social structure’ (Latour, 2005, p. 3) is the way in which wetlands are accounted for through the art of measuring land by names, or Earth-writing (Gren, 1994). Names are the illustrations of explanations that ‘in essence travel stories, infinite chains of metonymies in which one wor(l)d slides into another’ (Olsson, 2007, p. 67). While we would argue, along with Strang, that the experience of water and wetlands poses similar challenges and opportunities for humans irrespective of culture and context, the landscapes shown on maps necessarily reflect the pragmatic motives and social bonds of the map makers, their ideologies, and strife: ‘landscapes naturalise ideologies and social realities because they are so tangible, so natural, so familiar ...’ (Winchester *et al.*, 2003, p. 67). Indeed as the geographer Dennis Cosgrove points out (2006, p. 51), referring to his colleague Kenneth Olwig (2002): ‘... the pictorial in landscape incorporates a more visceral and experiential reference’. As we argued above, it is not enough to know nature; comparative ethnography is important too, drawing upon:

The extension of networks of knowing nature – which is in principle a complexifying process – is informed by a cartographic imaginary that actually trans- forms and perhaps limits complexity (Ellis & Waterton, 2005, p. 675).

The coordination of map illustration or cartographical reasoning endows the map with the strength of logical reasoning, but a closer examination also reveals that the lines on the map are wobbly, the coordination may not be there, the line as a form merely exists as a multitude of forms, indicating a complex topology of existential possibilities (Huijbens, 2006, p. 82).

In order to study meaning ‘the task is self-evident; study the particular coordinate net in which the clerics simultaneously captured and shaped their universe of material and social relations’ (Olsson, 2007, p. 65). With the cartographic overview and setting at a distance, the aim is to achieve an ‘initial flattening out of connections ... before meaning is teased out from a grid-like configuration of connections’ (Ellis & Waterton, 2005, p. 677). In maps the perception that people have of wetlands is embodied but at the same time, this perception depends on charts and map making:

It is crucial to stress ... that just as the map (of which the sign is merely a special case) is our privileged means for finding the way, so the travel story is the most effective device for transporting our imaginations from the utopian No-where to the actual Now-here; whenever I am saying “of course,” what I am really saying is that I am on course, that I am steered the way by the compass of the taken-for-granted (Olsson, 2007, p. 7).

The complexity of the mind that controls the emphases applied by humans to map making, in relation to wetlands, is illustrative thereof. Work on definitions and demarcation to facilitate map making relies on daily interaction of parties with diverse backgrounds, who view wetlands in terms of different standards and criteria (Huijbens & Palsson, 2009). In this simplest of interpretations, the *topos* graphically represented in the map is continually being circulated through different minds in different times; in every episteme ‘transporting our imaginations from the utopian No-where to the actual Now-here’ (Olsson, 2007, p. 7, see also Latour, 1999).

### ‘Sweet is the Swamp’

Mapping is usually the first step of any inventory that accompanies problem identification. The recognition of the importance of wetlands is reflected in an international convention, signed in Ramsar in Iran in 1971, entitled *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance*. The Ramsar Convention contains provisions on action and international cooperation that contribute to the protection and intelligent utilization of wetlands. Currently, 158 countries have signed the convention. The key aspect of the Ramsar agreement is the identification and inventorying of wetlands, so identifying 1500 wetland areas in the world, all considered important in an international context. Three of these are in Iceland: Mývatn District in

Northeast Iceland, Þjórsárver in the highland interior, and Grunnafjörður in the western part of the country. The Ramsar Convention illustrates a certain global view of the ecological value of wetlands, whose manifestations may be worth studying in a local context.

With the Ramsar inventorying rationale, international studies go as far as to approximate the annual value of wetlands, given their ecosystem services and natural capital. The price tag is US \$12.790 trillion, no less than one-third of the presumed total value for the world (Constanza *et al.*, 1997). Dubious price-tagging aside, a metaphor frequently used with respect to wetlands is that of 'biological supermarkets', on the grounds that they are characterized by biological variety (proportionately large numbers of organisms) and substantial biomass (Fraser & Keddy, 2005). The assertion is also often made that wetlands are 'biological machines' (White, 1996) or 'kidneys of the environment' (Fraser & Keddy, 2005), a reference to the important metabolism that acts within them, purifying waste from humans and other organisms. In demonstrating their importance, Mitch, a prominent wetland ecologist, constructed an experimental wetland with two man-made ponds in the shape of kidneys to monitor wetland purification processes (see Fink & Mitch, 2007). As indicative of the rationale of the Ramsar agreement, the area and the ponds were listed in April 2008.

The ecological valuing sketched above draws its imagery from early Romantic traditions. In poetic and cosmic contemplation of thinkers such as Dante, Milton and Ibsen, wetlands represented the forum of evil. For them, wetlands were an infernal domain where disease and nefarious acts were rampant. Dante said that wetlands encircled four of the innermost circles of Hell, where heretics and those who deliberately lie and cheat are tortured till the day of doom. Staged in the Fens of England, the novel *Waterland* by Graham Swift, perhaps, offers a modern version of Dante's approach. At the same time, it provides a series of intriguing observations of landscape and water:

Realism; fatalism; phlegm. To live in the Fens is to receive strong doses of reality. The great, flat monotony of reality; the wide, empty space of reality. Melancholia and self-murder are not unknown in the Fens. Heavy drinking, madness and sudden acts of violence are not uncommon. How do you surmount reality, children? How do you acquire, in a flat country, the tonic of elevated feelings? (Swift, 1983, p. 13). "Not to mince matters, children, and to offer you, in passing, an impromptu theory, sexuality reveals itself more readily, more precociously, in a flat land, in a watery prostration, than in, say, a mountainous or forested landscape, where

nature's own phallic thrustings inhibit man's, or in the landscape of towns and cities where a thousand artificial erections (a brewery chimney, a tower block) detract from our animal urges." (Swift, 1983, p. 137).

Wetlands have also been seen as holy territory, as symbols of life and renewal. The protagonist of this reaction, as it were, was the philosopher and environmentalist Henry David Thoreau, sometimes referred to as the protector and lover of wetlands, who emphasized that our ideas about wilderness are always inspired by Nature as reflected within ourselves: 'It is in vain to dream of a wilderness distant from ourselves, there is none such. It is the bog in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature in us that inspires that dream' (Thoreau, 1856; quoted in Prince, 1997, p. 337). To Thoreau, it is absurd merely to make room for Nature exclusively in our minds, since our guts generate the dream of Nature and the Wilderness. Emily Dickinson makes a similar point in her poem 'Sweet is the swamp with its secrets.' Addressing a potential editor in 1862, she wrote: 'You ask of my companions. Hills, sir, and the sundown, and a dog large as myself ... They are better than beings because they know, but do not tell: and the noise in the pool at noon excels my piano' (1959, p. 7).

Literary criticism has for long theorized the relation of place and text, of *oikos* and literary representation. The warp and weft of literature as it is written, read, distributed and translated retains the historically dense and often discordant experiences of language and places in all their complexities. While place alone, professor emeritus of literature William Howarth suggests, does not inform literary imagination, 'one locale stands out because it has a long history of ambiguous and also evolving cultural status: the wetland, in its manifold guises of bog, fen, marsh, or swamp' (1999, p. 513). In combining literary criticism and the ecological view of natural scientists, Howarth emphasizes the importance of knowing nature, challenging the popular view of literature as imagined territory without any natural limits; 'Only those who know little of nature', he argues, 'think imagination can surpass it' (1999, p. 510). 'Ecocriticism', he goes on, 'seeks new ways to concur with nature, to see it as environs, or surroundings, in which human lives transpire. If we include in our readings the wetlands with all their tangled shimmer of meanings, we will begin to imagine territory that has natural limits, for such places tell us what we may hold close, and what we must let go' (Howarth, 1999, p. 533).

Elsewhere (see Huijbens & Palsson, 2009) we have demonstrated how a particular genre of representation, i.e. the landscapes shown on maps, necessarily reflect the pragmatic motives and social bonds of the map

makers, their ideologies, and strife. We argue that it is indeed not self-evident what constitutes wetland, as Cosgrove points out (2006, p. 51): ‘... the pictorial in landscape incorporates a more visceral and experiential reference’. Arguably, it is not enough to know nature, in Howarth’s sense; comparative ethnography is important too. In line with this, the notion of ‘ecological anthropology’ popular in the 1970s and the 1980s seems to have been replaced by the more open-ended label of ‘environmental anthropology’ emphasizing the unity of humans and ‘that which surrounds’ (the etymological root of *environ*). The historian Donald Worster rightly suggests that ‘we ... have two histories to write, that of our own country and that of “planet Earth”, adding ‘when that larger planetary history gets fully written, it will surely have at its core the evolving relationship between humans and the natural world’ (1988, p. 6).

## In the Bog

For centuries utilization of Icelandic wetlands has been subject to changes. From the time of settlement, Icelanders living on a wet-weather island have had to cope with wetlands, avoiding them or tailoring them to their needs, extracting peat from them, ferric oxide and plants for food and fodder. Simultaneously they have given them meaning through art, literature and mythology.

A cultural attitude to marshes can be detected in the Icelandic Sagas. Marshes are there described as both oases and treacherous obstacles. Hrafnkel’s Saga offers the following narrative:

They now ride westwards out of the lava field and then arrive at another marsh named Uxamýri. It is grassy. The area is very wet, so that it is barely passable for those unfamiliar with it (Halldórsson *et al.*, 1987, p. 1413).

Vatnsdælasaga tells about a struggle in the middle of marshland between a man named Thórólfur and a Norwegian:

The Norwegian ran after him down towards Vatnsdal river. Thórólfur reached a point where there were deep pits or bogs. Thórólfur then turned against the man, seized him and placed him under his arm saying: ‘You are now instigating a race that we will both take part in’ and he ran into the bog, where they both sank and neither one came up (Halldórsson *et al.*, 1987, p. 1877).

The marsh, here referred to as a *fen*, is grassy but barely passable. Those familiar with it can use it, even to get rid of unwelcome strangers. The Sagas, one may note, and indeed much Scandinavian mythology and literature (Hastrup, p. 1985), similarly often contrast, on the one hand, the wild and uninhabitable domain of mysterious beings and, on the other hand, the domesticated world of the farm or the estate, *óðal*, symbolically demarcated and protected by a fence.

Prominent in the dealings of the early Icelandic settlers with the land is a dual use, so to speak, of wetlands. Some of the best hayfields were associated with wetlands or river floodplains subjected to cyclical inundations, especially those of the glacial rivers, e.g. Hvítá in Borgarfjörður. Moreover, accounts of the wetland's nefarious potential echo some of the notions of wetlands via Dante, Milton and later Ibsen. In more recent accounts, the barely passable fens are often veiled in humor, but tinged with seriousness. In a tale of his travels in 1862, the Californian John Ross Browne describes his trip to Þingvellir in the company of Geir Zoega (Magnússon, 1976). At the outset Browne had difficulty understanding why his guide consistently avoided what appeared to be easily traversable flatlands and persisted in laboriously climbing hills and slopes. At one point he decided to demonstrate how folks in the western parts of North America travel and he sallied forth into the flatlands, but his steed refused to continue when it reached the marshland. Finally, John managed to coax the horse to move but as soon as they were in the marsh they began to sink. Zoega's speedy reaction enabled him to rescue the horse from drowning, but Browne had in the meantime found safety on a small hummock nearby.

When they were back on dry land and Zoega was scraping the mud off the horse, John commented: 'It was rather wet out there.' Zoega stoically replied: 'Yes, sir [...] that is why I was planning to go around it' (Magnússon, 1976, p. 87). It is safe to assume that the Californian was not familiar with the old Icelandic proverb which roughly translates, 'Better to go around than end up in the bog' (Ic. *betri er krókur en kelda*). After this adventure, he describes the marshland as follows:

It is a strange feeling to look over such a stretch of land where the hummocks almost equal the height of a man. It is as if the treacherous ground had swallowed a group of bellicose Vikings, making their way through the wilderness, leaving them still standing there, covered up to their necks, with their ruffled heads exposed and defenseless against the elements.

You can often see human expressions on the hummocks and on moonlit nights, it does not require much imagination to see in them the phantoms of slayers struggling to get out of the swampland. Indeed, the ignorant farmers have, with their lively imaginative skills, endowed these phantoms with life and enjoy telling tales about their pranks on dark, foul weather nights, when the apparitions have allegedly been seen thrashing about and kicking in the swamp. Hoarse shrieks can be heard through the wind squalls and solitary travellers take a roundabout route so that those uncanny spectres, seeking companionship, do not pull them into the bogs (Magnússon, 1976, p. 88).

Drawing on other literary accounts of wetlands, *Iceland's Bell* by Iceland's only Nobel prize laureate in literature Halldór Laxness contains a lengthy account of an escapade in 'ugly bogs', meant to take place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It reads as follows:

It was after nightfall that men rode off from Galtarholt and they were all quite drunk. But because of the ale they had imbibed, they lost their way as soon as they were outside the home field wall, when they found themselves in rotting marshland with deep pits, swamps, ponds and peat bogs. This landscape seemed to have no end and the travellers wallowed in this entrance to Hell for the better part of the night (Laxness, 1943, p. 18-19).

In these two more recent writings, referred to above, the marshland is clearly the abode of evil, 'entrance to Hell' or the home of 'uncanny specters'. This description also applies to the Icelandic Sagas cited, where the marsh serves as a place of good riddance for strangers, but therein on the other hand lies also a hint that Icelanders have always utilized wetlands for cutting grass and for grazing purposes. How the benefits of wetlands could be reaped came to the fore towards the end of the 18th century. The marsh gradually ceases to serve as material for tales about the infernal domain of dark deeds and fades into the shadow of logical reasoning and modernism.

## Grand Engineering

The marsh that for long had been a concrete obstacle to travel later turned into an impediment to the ideology of modernism where humans in the



company of God were to shape the world to their needs (Glacken, 1967, p. 680 & 689). This can be gleaned from the detailed descriptions in the travel books of Eggert and Bjarni (Ólafsson & Palsson, 1978), Sveinn Palsson (1983) and Lord Stanley (1979) and also from the district descriptions of the 18th and 19th centuries, prepared at the behest of the Icelandic Literary Society. Along with these travel accounts, the first ever detailed accounting of land in Iceland in the *Book of Farmlands* by Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín (1982 [1703]), heralded the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment in Iceland. The descriptions of wetlands in the above travel accounts resemble in many ways the excerpt taken here from the travel book of Ólafur Olavius from 1775-1777:

Kaupangur Parish is ... grassy, but land there has gravely deteriorated because of marshes and ponds, which can possibly be drained, in a similar way that road improvements could be implemented there by building bridges and digging ditches (Olavius, 1965, p. 18).

Illuminated by the progressivism of the Enlightenment era, wetlands underwent more radical changes at the hands of humans than previously known. By innovative creativity in Icelandic agriculture in the past century and with the equipment then introduced (e.g. excavators, tractors and ground-leveling equipment) wetlands in most areas were drained. The use of powerful heavy equipment made it possible to manage wetlands, drain them, plan and bring order in accordance with current requirements relating to economy and profitability. For the proponents of modernism and progressivism the marsh is regarded as destructive to land and shameful, but the solution consists in digging ditches, much like the solution to transportation problems consists in road construction.

Many projects in Iceland and elsewhere have either not lived up to modernist expectations or proven to be dubious investments. Amongst them are many attempts by the Icelandic state authorities to gain control of marshlands, including large irrigation projects in the southern regions of Skeiðar and Flói (Kjartansson, 1988; see figures 2.1 and 2.2). Here, a grand engineering scheme was launched in 1914 with the financial aid of the national authorities, for the purpose of facilitating flexible management of water on individual farms and for increasing overall productivity in agriculture. An Icelandic engineer was in charge of the project, drawing upon plans developed by the Danish engineer Carl Thalbitzer. The project demanded massive funding, but the results were disappointing. Ironically, when the project was 'completed' it turned out to be more or less obsolete, due to other innovations in agriculture.

Figure 2.1 The grand engineering scheme of Southwest Iceland



Source: National Archives of Iceland

Figure 2.2 From the Flói irrigation system



Photo: Gisli Pálsson

**Figure 2.3** Canoeing in the “Dælur” of Stokkseyri



Photo: Gisli Palsson

The drainage schemes were later heavily criticized, by, among others, Laxness (see, especially, his article ‘The Warfare Against the Land’, 1971). Eventually, the ‘reclaiming’ of land gave way to a strong social movement favoring the reclaiming and protecting of wetlands along the lines of the Ramsar Convention. Many of the regions heavily drained in the early decades have seen the rebirth of wetlands with renewed vegetation and bird colonies. This is the result of both government initiatives and those of NGOs (as were the drainage schemes before). In some contexts, wetlands have turned out to provide new opportunities for local communities. Thus, one of the communities in the Flói region engineered last century, Stokkseyri, now offers canoeing for tourists in the coastal wetlands (see figure 2.3).

### **The Scenic and the Unscenic**

Indeed, an appreciation of the scenic is important (see Benediktsson, 2007 & 2008). The visual experience of landscape is meaningful, even going so far as to state that the mere glancing at it as the body is moved through the landscape involves a sensuous experience (Larsen, 2001). One important issue to emerge from recent discussions of wetlands is the aesthetic notion of the unscenic landscape and the resultant devaluation that tends to inform environmental practice and politics. The philosopher Holmes

Rolston emphasizes that for many people wetlands are by definition ugly: 'A "beautiful bog" or a "pleasant mire" are almost a contradiction in terms. Mountains are sublime; swamps are slimy' (2000, p. 584). Swift's *Waterland* presents a nice example of the unscenic in the context of wetlands:

For what is water, children, which seeks to make all things level, which has no taste or colour of its own, but a liquid form of Nothing? And what are the Fens, which so imitate in their levelness the natural dispositions of water, but a landscape which, of all landscapes, most approximates Nothing? (Swift, 1983, p. 10).

Whereas Rolston (2002) challenges the notion that the landscape of wetlands 'most approximates Nothing', and is ready to see scenic beauty almost everywhere, another philosopher, Yuriko Saito, remains skeptical. The picturesque emphasis on vision, Saito argues, clearly reduces some parts of nature to being 'scenically challenged' and, moreover, the unscenic deserves more attention and appreciation. But on the other hand, she suggests, it makes no sense to claim that 'everything in nature is aesthetically appreciable' (2000, p. 109). Thus, wetlands constitute part of a larger pattern in nature. The literary interpretations of wetlands counter modernism by pointing out that not all is gained by the mechanization of agriculture and the resulting drainage of a substantial portion of marshes and wetlands. Wetlands are not necessarily the manifestation of evil or obstacles to progress.

In modern Iceland, wetlands can be seen in a variety of roles created by writers. *The Mire* by the novelist Arnaldur Indriðason (2000) and a film by the same name render the North Mire in Reykjavík the scene of crimes and nefarious acts. The novelists Guðmundur Daníelsson (1981) and Halldór Laxness (1971), on the other hand, both write about wetlands as something very different from and much more significant than muddy bogs requiring drainage. Water, including its currents and flow, is, as professor emeritus of literature Helga Kress (2000) points out, an important and familiar theme both in Icelandic and foreign literature.

The fickleness of the self-image was the constant interest of the novelist Ásta Sigurðardóttir. In a book published in 1961, she describes the areas where she grew up, i.e., in the Hnappadalur valley area and in the Mire area. She says: 'The Mire area is not particularly beautiful, as we generally understand the meaning of the word' (1961, p. 13). Sigurðardóttir on the other hand talks about the 'beauty of the marshland': 'blessed peace pervades the hilly marshland and the spirit of God hovers above the swamps in

the form of the plover that sings glory, glory' (1961, p. 13). She describes the fragrance of the plants and the lovely colours of the marshland. She walks about the marsh and depicts how 'the pitch black lye water billows up from each footprint'. It presumably was a valley bog, near the childhood home of Sigurðardóttir, which she walked through. Some Icelandic writers have described wetlands as inspirers of emotions, kindlers of both self-image contemplation and understanding of nature, in a manner similar to that described in the words of Thoreau: 'This inimitable charm of the marshland simply oozes through you, especially when you are barefoot' (Sigurðardóttir, 1961, p. 14).

## To Conclude

In the last years, the writings of natural scientists have been directed to the ecological context of drainage and protection. 'Reforms' of wetlands have, on the one hand, initiated controversial ecological changes and, on the other hand, they have occasionally turned out to be anachronisms, of little use or even at odds with other innovations in agriculture (see e.g. Robertson, 2000, pp. 463-464). Many natural scientists have pointed out that wetland areas are very important in terms of climate and its changes (see e.g. in an Icelandic context, Ólafsson, 1998; Óskarsson & Guðmundsson, 2005). Little attention has, on the other hand, been paid to the analysis of the perceptions, attitudes, and relations of those who are in close contact with wetlands and involved in discussions about them, their drainage, reclamation, management and research thereof. In their writings, natural scientists often refer to the usefulness of wetlands. Thus modernism appears, but laced with ecological valuation that draws on a more holistic understanding. The progressive ethos remains, aiming to gain the perfect understanding in order to utilise and harness resources for human benefit. In the international context, the ambiguous relation between place and its literary representation, the dream of nature, and its generation are echoed in the expanded ecological understanding presented by Mitch. Partly with reference to the catastrophes in New Orleans in 2005, he explains how local urban development by its neglect of the needs of the water and the drainage projects of the wetlands surrounding the city, had actually caused these catastrophes, which will recur (see Mitch & Gosselink, 2007, p. 353). Mitch contends that in our approach to wetlands we must 'think like water' and realize that it will always find its way.

For the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988) deserts and water are examples of smooth space while the land, subject to the control of humans, is constantly striated, distributed and divided. Borders and property boundaries can be drawn on land, even in the form of walls. This is more difficult at sea, and ownership boundaries in marine regions must be controlled from shore. Wetland falls, on the other hand, between land and sea;

The two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 474).

From the unmolded mass of water of the marshland of the mind, ideas are shaped that are controlled by the discussion and technological competence of the day. These ideas are transformed into action and have now striated the land with ditches. Nowadays these ditches are occasionally filled up and in the course of time marshland is formed anew – we let the water decide sometimes. Thus, the wetland is transformed into a mass of water, which is never the same from one day to another, smooth under foot, the source of endless ideas – smooth space.

When the rhetoric of modernism was at its peak, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, marshes and wetlands constituted obstacles to progress. This approach reached its climax in the grand engineering schemes developed in southern Iceland in the middle of the last century. Later on, a strong social movement advocated the reclaiming of wetlands. A somewhat romantic reaction to modernism created the ideological flexibility needed to see wetlands in another light. Holistic ecological valuation became the founding understanding of wetlands as an ecological system of global significance.

By now it seems patently clear to most people that the ‘natural’ climate of the globe has a lot to do with human activities. Not only have humans significantly contributed to global warming during the last decades, they have also had an important impact on climate for thousands of years, particularly through their use of fire. For some scholars, the notions of ‘naturecultures’ and ‘biosociality’ capture the fact that nature is increasingly being remade through technology, becoming more and more artificial. This is an issue often addressed by the social sciences and the humanities, including anthropology (Crate & Nuttall, 2009), through discussions of human perceptions and understandings of short-term and long-term

atmospheric fluctuations, weather and climate of which wetlands and the social attitudes towards them form an integral part.

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### 3 Biographies of Biotopes

*Jan Kolen*

#### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the possibilities of a biographical approach to places and landscapes that we conventionally experience as natural – where humans do not belong, but merely act in the background or are not fully present. The chapter starts with the recent Mannahatta Project, which sets out to recreate the unspoiled natural landscape of Manhattan that Henry Hudson encountered in 1609, and with a critical analysis of the related idea of a primordial landscape (or *Urlandschaft*) which is still very popular in disciplines like geology, ecology, archaeology and historical geography. It will be argued that even the most ‘anonymous’, ‘natural’ and ‘original’ of landscapes bears the imprint of authorship and personal identity, not only in terms of past human presence and practices, but also in terms of aesthetic experiences, retrospective vision, scientific interpretation and naturalist engagement. The chapter then presents two examples of the biographies of wetland biotopes in the Netherlands. These examples show how humans have creatively and self-consciously contributed to biotopes by categorizing nature and spotting wildlife, and by constantly reshaping the land, introducing animals and influencing the vegetation. This doesn’t mean, however, that these landscapes cease being natural. In the last part of the chapter it will be argued that biotopes are ‘landscaping’ us as much as we are ‘socializing’ them. This dialectic of landscape characterizes all moments of human action, but also –or particularly- unfolds over time, as will be shown for the Dutch river landscape.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, biotopes, nature, culture, landscaping

#### **Introduction: Biotopes**

Even more so than the large urban networks of our time, the natural landscapes of the prehistoric past appear to have been anonymous entities, largely devoid of humans and lacking individual authorship. However, on closer inspection, even the most ‘anonymous’, ‘natural’ and ‘original’ of landscapes bears the imprint of human authorship

and personal identity, not only in terms of past human presence and practices, but also in terms of aesthetic experiences, retrospective vision, scientific interpretation and naturalist engagement. For this reason, this chapter explores the possibilities of a biographical approach to places and landscapes that we conventionally experience as natural. We take a long journey from sixteenth-century Mannahatta to the 19th-century rural landscape of the southeastern Netherlands, in order to continue the discussion about the role of people as 'authors' of landscapes. From categorizations of nature I will then move to the ways in which humans and non-human animals collaborate in the reshaping of landscapes, and how they have to cope at times with environmental changes generated by both themselves and others. I will discuss this last point by referring to another wetland in the Netherlands, the landscape of the Loowaard near the river Rhine. This example is based on a fine study by Elings (2007), who recently wrote an essay on the biography of this particular and interesting wetland meadow.

Although I consistently use the term 'nature' throughout this chapter, it has become increasingly clear that the concept is a notoriously complex one and that what we term 'nature' is extremely difficult to distinguish from culture (*e.g.* Cronon, 1996; Castree, 2005; Olwig, 2009; Palsson, 2011). Not surprisingly, the complex intellectual realm of the nature/culture dualism and of nature-culture relationships is one of the most hotly debated issues in the social, natural and environmental sciences. In a time span of less than thirty years this discussion has shifted from rather essentialist and conservationist views of nature, still based on a dualistic understanding of nature and culture grounded in the dominant traditions of Western thought, to postmodern philosophies criticizing this dualism and replacing it with the view that all of nature is in fact culturally constructed, and finally to more balanced ideas that derive from ecological psychology, phenomenology and non-representational theory in geography. It is not my ambition here to present an overview of these debates and shifts, nor will I look for a proper definition of 'nature' that best suits the biographical approach to landscapes. Instead, I propose to study the life histories of landscapes from a rather uncommon perspective of biotopes, as demonstrated particularly in the sections on the Loowaard and the Dutch river landscapes, as well as in the final section. I will use the term 'biotope' not so much in the classical ecological sense, as the habitat of a biological community of plants and animals (including the uniform environmental conditions defining that place), but in the more general sense of a place (*topos*) where

humans, non-human animals and other organisms live together while also creating and sustaining their own life worlds (*bios*). In this sense, of course, urban landscapes are also biotopes, or contain biotopes. In the following I will pose the question of authorship and will view the history of landscapes from this angle.

## From the Primordial Landscape to Socialized Nature

Some years ago, the ecologist Sanderson (2009) had the idea of reconstructing as accurately as possible the landscape of Manhattan in around 1600, when the island was still called Mannahatta ('island of many hills'). His research project aimed to give a true-to-life impression of the landscape that greeted Henry Hudson's crew when they landed there in 1609 – that is, before the landscape was interfered with by European colonists. Sanderson reports on his natural history quest in his impressive book *Mannahatta: A natural history of New York City* (2009).

Step-by-step, Sanderson and his team used at least four methods to make his reconstructions of the Mannahatta landscape. The first is rather conventional and includes what geographers call morphogenetic analysis. Starting with the surprisingly detailed British Headquarters Map from 1782, they 'stripped away' all features that had been added to the landscape by the first European settlers, such as roads, farms and fortifications. The result is a reduction of the cultural landscape of the settlers to what are called the 'basic building blocks of the physical landscape', consisting of shorelines, cliffs, hills, rivers and ponds. Secondly, they applied a kind of generalized ecosystems approach. Basing themselves on reliable knowledge about the main ecosystems in the area, such as old-growth forests, wetlands and plains, they populated their geomorphological reconstructions with plants and animals that were likely to have lived on the island. Thirdly, they filled in the biotic details by means of ecological modelling using what they call 'Muir webs'. These are modelled connections between habitat elements, such as an animal species or a plant community. Each connection is a relationship based on food, shelter, water or reproduction, or in the case of abiotic elements, on physical process dependencies like soil formation or erosion. By extrapolating Muir webs from empirically observed, living biotopes elsewhere in the world, Sanderson's team claims to be able to sketch a picture of biotopes whose fauna and flora have left no traces whatsoever in Manhattan itself. Muir webs also visualize the relative importance

of species in creating and maintaining ecosystems. In the Mannahatta ecosystems, the beaver obviously was one of the key players: 'The beaver, it turns out, is a landscape architect, just like people (...). You need him to flood the forest, which kills the trees that attract the woodpeckers that knock out cavities that wood ducks use for shelter' (Miller, 2009, p. 137). Finally, the reconstructed landscapes are nicely visualized by means of realistic artistic animations, which are all compared with the imposing and urban picture of Manhattan today. This step shows, for instance, that the present-day intersection of Seventh Avenue and Broadway, one of Manhattan's most hectic and crowded places, was once a quiet beaver pond with red maple, at the junction of two creeks.

Sanderson's study thus produced innumerable beautiful maps and panoramas of the Manhattan landscape in 1609, as well as poetic descriptions of the original landscape and its inhabitants:

Mannahatta had more ecological communities per acre than Yellowstone, more native plant societies per acre than Yosemite, and more birds than the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. Mannahatta housed wolves, black bears, mountain lions, beavers, mink, and river otters; whales, porpoises, seals, and the occasional sea turtle visited its harbour. Millions of birds of more than a hundred and fifty different species flew over the island annually on transcontinental migratory pathways; millions of fish – shad, herring, trout, sturgeon, and eel – swam past the island up the Hudson River and its streams during annual rites of spring. Sphagnum moss from the North and magnolia from the South met in New York City, in forests with over seventy kinds of trees, and wetlands with over two hundred kinds of plants. Thirty varieties of orchids once grew on Mannahatta. Oysters, clams, and mussels in the billions filtered the local water; the river and the sea exchanged their tonics in tidal runs and freshets fuelled by a generous climate; and the entire scheme was powered by the moon and the sun, in ecosystems that reused and retained water, soil, and energy, in cycles established over millions of years (Sanderson, 2009, p. 10).

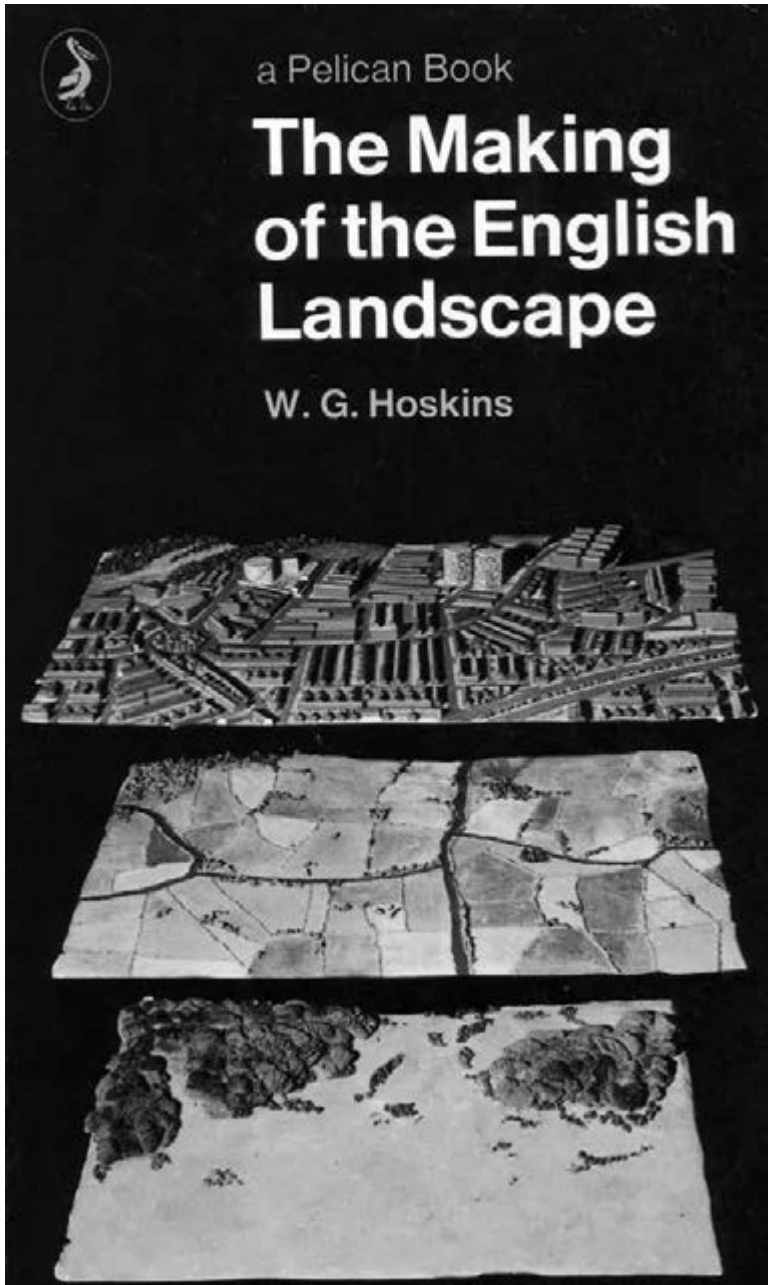
Sanderson's outstanding historical ecological project pictures Mannahatta as an unspoiled and timeless landscape of unimaginable ecological diversity, richness and beauty. Yet there is also something rather disquieting about this landscape. What is frequently missing from Sanderson's landscape are people – nameable, human agents who have contributed to the landscape and left their mark on it, people who, in the sense of both Samuels (1979)

and de Certeau (1984), have turned it into an 'authored landscape'. This is odd because, as the name suggests, people did live in 1609 Mannahatta. Sanderson names them too, the Lenape, and in some of his landscape portraits tiny twists of smoke, emerging from the rain forest, betray their hearths and their secret presence. In one chapter he describes their way of life and cultivated plants (Sanderson, 2009, p. 102-135), and he includes a list of known Lenape sites and place names as an appendix. In the end, however, they are eliminated from his beautiful pictures of the original Mannahatta landscape. Except for one – a picture of a small village near a pond, situated in a seemingly endless forest, at the place which is now Foley Square. We could think of countless traces of the Lenape's authorship, from routes, dwellings, smells, fields, crops and secondary forest to stories, burials, songs and traps, not forgetting the people themselves of course. We cannot escape the impression that for Sanderson, the Lenape belonged to nature, unlike the first settlers and soldiers who created a cultural landscape that disrupted the natural equilibrium. 'Of all the ways in which people find meaning in the world, perhaps the only one that is not satisfied to the hilt in Manhattan is the one that the city's earliest residents, the Lenape, found most important: a connection to nature', says Sanderson (2009, p. 210).

By definition, human 'authors' do not belong in a primeval landscape. Nevertheless, the landscape of Mannahatta shows countless signs of this authorship, quite apart from the smoke of Lenape fires. In the first and final analysis, this is naturally the question of the landscape reconstructions created by Sanderson and his team. A kind of authorship is also evident in the Muir webs on which their work on landscape reconstructions is partly based. Muir webs are of course not real entities but constructions. They are an intellectual invention, named after the noted American naturalist John Muir, who emerged during the second half of the 19th century as one of the pioneers of the preservation of Wild America (Heacox 1996). Sanderson understandably admires Muir, and it is no coincidence that the Mannahatta project contains so many comparisons with the country's national parks. 'If the island had stayed the way it was back then, it could have become a national park like Yosemite or Yellowstone', Sanderson said in an interview with *National Geographic* (Miller, 2009, p. 136). Perhaps this, too, is one of the hidden messages of the project – that modern human society in Manhattan has ultimately destroyed a national park, a potential *haut-lieu* of the great American naturalist tradition.



Figure 3.1 Archetypal representation of the linear development of a cultural landscape out of and upon the primordial natural landscape



Cover of the 1970 edition of "The Making of the English Landscape" by W.G. Hoskins

The Mannahatta Project is the embodiment of an archetypal view of landscape development, one which has dominated ecology, geography and landscape archaeology for decades. In fact we encounter this view in every influential school of geographical landscape research, from German *Anthropogeographie* and the cultural geography of the Berkeley School to the English local history approach and applied historical geography. This view proposes the gradual creation of the human-made landscape from a still unspoiled natural world. In this way of thinking, still existing 'natural landscapes' such as national parks continue to reflect something of the original state of the *Urlandschaft*.

Most anthropologists, geographers and archaeologists would now agree that the nature/culture distinction is part and parcel of the modernist project, and that this also accounts for our thinking about the landscape (Palsson, 2011; see also Gregory, 2001). In *Landscape & Memory*, Simon Schama states that 'even the landscapes that we suppose to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product' (Schama, 1995, p. 9). However, he goes on to say that 'this is a cause not for guilt and sorrow but celebration. Would we rather that Yosemite [...] had never been identified, mapped, emarked? [...] At the very least, it seems right to acknowledge that it is our shaping perception that makes the difference between raw matter and landscape' (1995, p. 9-10). In this sense, as a sediment of academic and social constructions and values, including a carefully constructed image of what – by contemporary cultural standards – unspoiled nature *ought* to be, Sanderson's natural landscape of Mannahatta also imperceptibly becomes an *authored* landscape.

Still, we must be wary of falling into the trap of a radical constructivism, one which ultimately reduces all nature to human proportions, to the sum of our cultural notions and values. A constructivist view of landscape which allows no room for human-nature interactions and for landscape as a 'real world' phenomenon is just as undesirable as an essentialist nature that supposedly exists entirely outside culture (cf. Putnam, 1981). Although all landscapes are imbued with and involve the continuous production of social values, this doesn't mean that our experience of landscape is simply 'decided' by those values. Firstly, landscapes don't stop being natural when humans play a constructive role in their transmission or transformation – be it with their hands, their minds or both. And secondly, as Palsson states, humans are themselves always simultaneously part of nature and society (Palsson, 2011). Therefore, we should ask ourselves whether it is possible to envision landscapes, including their authorship, so as to circumvent the dualism between primordial nature and cultural landscapes. The French

anthropologist Philippe Descola is optimistic about this, stating that '[b]etween a structuralist nature that is good to think and a Marxist nature that is good to exploit there is perhaps room for a nature that is merely good to socialize' (Descola, 1992, p. 112). This demands that we explore the relationships between humans and nature more closely in specific social and ecological settings.

Philippe Descola describes his approach as 'symbolic ecology'. He says that all societies develop specific ways of distinguishing between humans and non-humans, between the 'self' and the 'other'. Each society thereby also creates its own social topography. The Western way, which is based on a distinction between natural species with exclusive (intrinsic) qualities, between living beings and inanimate things, and between beings *with* self-awareness (humans) and beings *without* (animals and plants), is just one example. In Descola's view, one of the core tasks of anthropology is to document the wide variation in human dealings with, and experiences of, nature. Firstly, says Descola, there are very different 'modes of identification', ways in which societies identify with nature. In totemic systems, empirically observed discontinuities between natural species – usually animals – are used to name and organize social entities. In animistic systems, on the other hand, human and social qualities are 'projected' onto non-human phenomena in the environment. In addition, there are dualistic and naturalistic systems. In the former, we find both totemic and animistic elements. In the latter, which best typify Western societies, humans and non-humans at first appear to have little in common, but on closer inspection we can often discern deep relationships that are based on highly diverse forms of interaction.

In Descola's view, these 'modes of identification' are no more than crude characterizations. The structures that societies ultimately apply in their life world derive their specific character primarily from 'modes of relation' and 'modes of categorization'. Some societies organize the relationships between people and nature in terms of reciprocity and care. Many gatherer-hunters view their environment as giving, as in a family, rather than in terms of reciprocity, as between kin (Bird-David, 1990). Other societies conceptualize their relations with nature and the environment in terms of misappropriation, robbery or exploitation (e.g. in certain Western systems). Finally, societies differ in terms of the 'logic' with which they distinguish and classify categories, resulting in a diverse range of folk taxonomies for the plant and animal world (Nightingale, 2009). Because of this, classifications of nature vary enormously, also in instances where ecologists see similar environment types and biotopes.

At first glance Descola's symbolic ecology appears to offer a nuanced alternative to one-sided constructivist and essentialist approaches to the relationships between people and their life world – and a useful concept for tackling the life histories of biotopes. To investigate this I propose to take a long journey, from sixteenth-century Mannahatta to the 19th-century landscape of the southern Netherlands.

## Fens and Birds

Hidden in the Southern Netherlands landscape are countless small fens (regionally called '*vennen*') of just a few hectares in size and surrounded by boggy heathland. In the eastern part of this area is De Peel, a vast raised peat bog that in the 19th century covered more than 100,000 hectares. And finally, the landscape is intersected by a dendritic network of river and stream valleys, dotted by broad flood plains where the river water would regularly stagnate, causing great inconvenience (but at the same time creating nutrient-rich grazing land and productive meadows). To this day these wetland biotopes have played a key role in the life world of the region's village communities. To illustrate this I will take you back to the latter half of the 19th century. Although that period coincided with some fascinating transformations of the southern Netherlands landscape, I have also chosen this particular moment in time for a more pragmatic reason. For the period from about 1840 to 1920 we have access to a vast array of sources of information, thanks in large part to the many systematic field surveys conducted at that time for the production of topographical maps and atlases. Over one hundred of these surveys were carried out in the area between 1836 and 1858 for the 'Topographical and Military Map of the Netherlands' (TMK), on a scale of 1:50.000. This then served as a basis for the Atlas of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1841/1842) and a thematic atlas of the Netherlands with provincial maps (1866). In the decades that followed, field surveys were carried out for the corrected 'Chromotopografische Kaart des Rijks' (scale 1:25.000), for which map sheets were published between 1866 and 1921. Mapping the Netherlands was a national political and military undertaking founded on the geometric methods and geographical knowledge of university-trained engineers and cartographers. The topographical field surveys were carried out by trained surveyors, usually plain-clothes officers who supplemented their information with knowledge of the landscape gleaned from military police, inhabitants and local administrators. These additions related mainly to the local names of

hamlets, fields, fens and other 'land marks', making the maps much more than cartographical representations of the landscape by outsiders. They articulate the spatial logics of the modernist project, from which the more recent traditions in cartography arose, as well as their complex interactions with local perceptions of the landscape (see also Huijbens & Palsson, this volume).

I will take as my example the map sheets for several village areas south-east of the Brabant city of Eindhoven, situated along the perimeter of the large peat moor region of De Peel, which encircles several villages like a horseshoe. The 1838-1857 maps show the villages located on higher sandy plateaus that are separated from one another by rivers and streams. In about the mid-19th century these villages and hamlets were still small, with most hamlets numbering a few dozen farmhouses (often less than ten). Larger villages, like Someren and Asten, comprised several hundred houses and farmhouses. Surrounding the villages were the complexes of arable land, where the fields were built up over the course of centuries with sods from the heathland and turf from the stream valleys, mixed with manure from the byres.

The remaining area around the sandy plateaus, which made up by far the bulk of the village territories, belonged to the so-called *gemeynt*, the lands that were communally exploited and managed. Throughout this area from about 1300 the lords, such as the Duke of Brabant, transferred the right to use these lands to the village communities. The *gemeynt* was made up of the coppices, stream valleys, heathland and the high moor plateau of De Peel. Until at least the Late Middle Ages the river and stream valleys were in most places made up of boggy, marshy depressions through which the water slowly trickled. Once the rights of use were transferred to the hamlets, the stream valleys were increasingly parcelled up and drained as plots of land were allotted for reclamation. This process gave rise to a dense network of meadows and hayfields with hedgerows (*beemden*). The streams themselves functioned as boundaries, partitioning the pastureland among neighbouring village communities. The Middle Ages onward have produced a multitude of historical reports of boundary disputes, such as conflicts about the installation of fishing weirs in streams and about grazing and penning (*schutten*) cattle.

The heathland fulfilled a vital function for the village communities (Burny, 1999; Roymans *et al.*, 2009). It was where cattle and sheep were grazed, where sods were cut for the fields, where hay was harvested as winter fodder for stabled livestock, and where building materials (clay and reeds) and fuel (moor peat) were gathered. Parts of the heath also

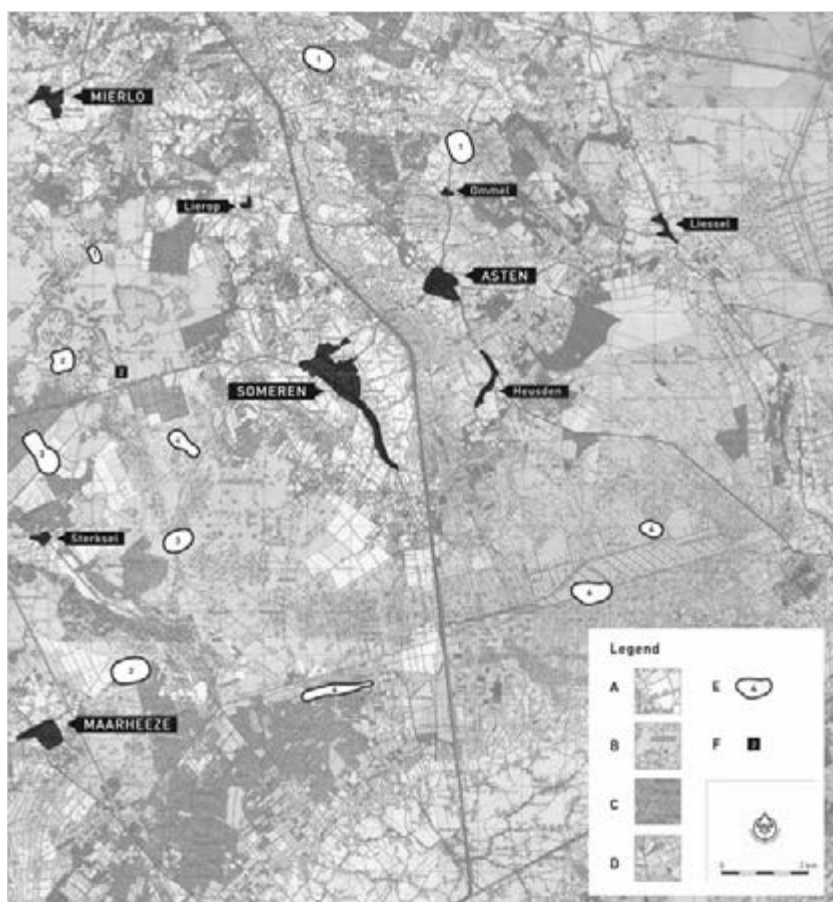
served as honey fields. All these activities led to an appreciable expansion of the heath from the Late Middle Ages. By the 19th century a Brabant pastor was able to describe the landscape as one 'where the heath touches the sky' (Van der Heijden, 1996, p. 64). The bare high moor plateau of De Peel also conjured up associations with celestial infinity, as evidenced by the name 'Eternal Life' given to part of the plateau on the 1838-1857 and 1866-1921 maps. The maps show that the 19th-century heathland still contained many large fens, spread in a wide arc around the villages at some distance from centres of habitation. Easily recognizable, they are depicted in detail on the maps – as blue areas with shaded contours (the symbol for wetlands) standing out sharply against a purple pink background of heathland, filled with tussock-like symbols (marsh) and with their names in the centre.

The abundance of fens in this part of the Low Countries is linked to the soil composition as the subsoil contains impermeable layers that in many places cause rainwater to stagnate. Ecologically the fens contain a vast abundance. Because of the many transitions from wet to dry, they are rich in ecological gradients. However, the broad diversity in wetland biotopes and their special position in the living space of human communities cannot be expressed solely in these 'classically' geological and ecological terms. Like the heathland, the fens were also exploited in a variety of ways in the 19th century, as reflected in their names on the topographical maps of 1838-1857 and 1866-1921. Many of these names can be traced back to the Late Middle Ages since they appear in archive documents from that period (Beijers & Van Bussel, 1996).

The map names show that the fens were put to an almost inexhaustible range of uses (Burny, 1999). It was common practice to graze, water and wash livestock in or near fens. In the peat fens (*turf-* and *klottervennen*), peat and turf sods were gathered for fuel. Names like Rootvlaas and Vlasven refer to flax cultivation, while buckwheat was cultivated at other fens. Fens were also used for fish farming (especially tench), in which case they were called *wijer* or *weyer* (=vijver, pond). Some were even used for the specialist cultivation of medicinal leeches (*echels*). Leeches were harvested (*echelen*) and traders would then transport them in large pots on their backs, travelling as far afield as Darmstadt in the German Rhineland to sell them to doctors and hospitals (Burny, 1999, p. 24). Thus the use to which fens were put was often based on special relationships between people and animals, although these were usually of an exploitative kind.



**Figure 3.2** Map of the historical village areas of Someren and Asten (Noord-Brabant, The Netherlands) around 1900 with fens with bird names



Legend: A = village with arable land; B = heath; C = forest; D = meadows and hayfields with hedgerows (brook valleys); E = fen with bird name; F = Hoenderboom (a tree – territorial marker named after gamebirds); 1 = crane; 2 = gamebirds; 3 = crow/jackdaw; 4 = other (bittern, stilt, lapwing, stork)

Background: Chromotopografische Kaart des Rijks 1:25.000, 1866-1921: Historical Atlas Noord-Brabant, Den IJp (1991)

Map produced by Bert Brouwenstijn and Jaap Fokkema, VU University Amsterdam

An exception here is a fairly large group of fens with bird names. Thus we find in the Strabrechtse Heide east of the villages the Kranenmeer (crane), Henneven (gamebirds), Hoenderven (idem), the Hoenderboom (idem), the Kouwvennen (jackdaw) and Kraayenstark (crow). This heath also contains the Eierven (eggs), the Kuikensven (chicks), and the Keelven, whose name

possibly refers to the presence of a decoy. Names containing *henne* and *hoender* can also refer to different species, such as pheasants, partridges, quails, moorhen or even the rarer black grouse. The *hoenderboom* named after one of these species was a tree that served as a boundary marker in the middle of the water-logged heath landscape bordering on the Grafven. The tree, mentioned in a deed from 1196, was later replaced by a post. Near De Peel, along the southern perimeter of the village areas, we find the Roerdompven (bittern), Steltloperven (*stelt*, or stilt, is a generic term for birds belonging to the stork and crane family) and De Kievit (lapwing). Two small streams here – the Ooyevaarsrijt (stork) and Kievitsloop (lapwing) – are also named after birds. Finally, north of the villages are the Kranenven and Kranevlaas (crane). Fens and water courses featuring bird names are also common in the neighbouring village areas. This is particularly true of crane toponyms, of which more than fifty are known in the eastern part of the southern Netherlands alone. These toponyms correspond to the present-day migration route. Twice a year, in April and October, large flights of cranes can be seen above the area, en route to their habitats in North Africa and southern Spain (in winter) and Scandinavia (in summer).

The birds associated with the fens are not representative of hunting and domestication in that period. We know that villagers living near the fens searched there for birds' eggs and hunted swans, geese, ducks and gamebirds. But with the exception of the latter, we barely encounter these species in fen names. In many cases therefore the nomenclature will have been inspired by people's fascination with qualities attributed to the birds (e.g. in the case of crows and storks), with their distinctive call (bitterns, lapwings, cranes), their relative rarity, or their brief presence (cranes) (Burny, 1999, p. 60). In the first half of the 20th century, village communities in De Kempen in Belgium, which borders on the southern Netherlands landscape, still regarded the migration of cranes as a collective experience. They looked forward to the birds' arrival and would count the number of flights and birds. They also spoke of encounters with cranes on the ground as memorable events (Burny, 1999, p. 60-61). The latter half of October was called 'crane summer' because it was commonly known that the coming of the cranes followed a brief spell of warm weather. This special fascination also extended to other bird species, such as black grouse, which were only sighted during a few periods of successive years in the 19th century (Burny, 1999, p. 59-61). Some locals even discerned a link between the arrival of the black grouse and an exceptional phase in the development of vegetation. They knew the *heihaan* (the local name for black grouse) primarily as seed-eaters. But in a particular period the birds were known to be attracted to marsh cinquefoil,



Figure 3.3 Cranes (background) return to a fen in the Groote Peel in 2011



Photo: Ad van Duren

which initially grew in old peat pits. When the pits closed over once again, the marsh cinquefoil disappeared from the plant community and the black grouse sought refuge in more southern parts, such as the Haute-Famenne. In all these examples, bird sightings brought not just a spatial but also a temporal order to the landscape.

As well as bird names the historical maps show a further category of animal-related fen names, this time referring to livestock. Commonly occurring names such as *Schaaps Bleek* (sheep), *Schaapsven* (idem), *Ossen Bleek* (cattle) and *Waschven* relate to the earlier use of fens for grazing, watering and washing cattle and flocks of sheep. Dairy cattle grazing on the heathland would often stray hundreds of metres from the cattle paths in order to drink from ponds and fens (Burny, 1999; Van der Heijden, 1996, p. 64-70). From June to August, when there was less grass growing in the stream valleys and home meadow, the cows in and around the fens also ate the tips of reeds, purple moorgrass and long grass, and were therefore still able to produce good-quality milk (Burny, 1999, p. 25). The 'washing fens' were used for washing sheep. Just before being shorn, the sheep would be driven into the deep water, where they could be easily restrained during the washing process. Sometimes the sheep were shorn first and only then

was the wool washed. The shepherds would leave the wool to soak in the fen for several days to make it easier to extract the dirt (Burny, 1999, p. 25-26).

It is well known that stock represented a special value for past societies on the northwest European plain. We see this in the fact that the Dutch 'vee' and German 'Vieh' are related to the English word 'fee' (Old English 'feoh'), which means 'money', 'possession' or 'fortune' (Van Veen & Van der Sijs, 1997, p. 925). This value was affirmed socially and spatially by the byre house that was so typical of the plain. This combination of dwelling and stabling made its appearance during the Bronze Age and underwent numerous transformations that continue to this day. The cohabitation of people and livestock under one roof was an expression of their strong bond, which in many respects bore the hallmarks of a true kinship (Huijbers, 2007). It is quite possible that the design of the first churches in the southern and eastern Netherlands was inspired by that of the common byre house, so that the relationship of God to the parishioners could be modelled in a cosmological sense on the familiar relationship between a shepherd and his flock, a farmer and his cattle (Kolen, 2006; Huijbers, 2007; see also Norberg-Schulz, 1996, p. 86-93).

Roymans *et al.* (2009) assume that the Christianization of southern Netherlands communities gradually produced a landscape dichotomy between a Christian 'inner world' – the domain of the church, people and livestock – and a pagan outside world dominated by nature and anti-Christian forces in the minds of the communities. The origins of heathenism thus lay in the landscape (the literal meaning of 'heathen' is 'of the heath') (Van Veen & Van der Sijs, 1997, p. 368). Viewed in these terms, the sandy paths and cattle paths on the heath were the rare 'cultural offshoots' into the domain of chaos and nature. The ethnologist Gurevich, however, stresses the ambiguous nature of the late medieval Christian life world in this respect (Gurevich, 1988; 1995, p. 29). In his view, the cultural and natural and the Christian and pagan dimensions of the landscape were not spatially exclusive, but differed from place to place in terms of intensity and their interrelationships. The fact that the heath did not by definition evoke associations with menacing nature and anti-Christian forces is evident in the role played by livestock in mediating between places in the inhabited world (the byre house) and the heathland (such as the fens). It doesn't seem to have been a problem that the livestock, which after all spent the night under the same roof as the farmers, were then put out to graze on the heathland during the day. These landscape zones also became linked economically through a variety of symbiotic relationships. The sods cut on the heath were mixed with manure from the byre, and this rich blend was used to fertilize the fields

Figure 3.4 Two boys herding cattle on a wet heathland near Eisdien (Limburg, The Netherlands), c. 1900



After Burny 1999, p. 46

between the villages and the *gemeynt*. Gurevich emphasizes, however, that a temporal structure, the cycle of day and night, lent the heath a certain ambiguity. The darkness evoked a different reservoir of forces and associations. The outside world only became chaotic, unpleasant and threatening when night fell, from which time good Christians would do better to avoid these heathenish places.

Even the fairly small group of fen names on the historical maps from 1838-1921, supplemented by other historical sources such as oral history, reveals a rich and differentiated natural world. This world was not a strict ecological given, but also the product of a meticulous ordering in terms of species and relationships by local inhabitants armed with sharp observational powers and a highly developed environmental sensitivity. By recalling names, recollecting memories and executing their daily economic activities, people imbued the landscape with enduring relationships between themselves, places and prominent animal inhabitants (both wild and domestic).

The specific way in which 19th-century communities ordered their natural environment in the southern Netherlands is further highlighted if we compare it with 'modes of categorization' in roughly equivalent regions elsewhere in the Low Countries, such as the peat bog region of the central Netherlands and the peat moor landscape of Drenthe in the northeastern Netherlands. The comparison best applies to this latter region, although there were also differences between 19th-century Drenthe and Brabant in geographical, economic and social respects (Spek, 2004). Drenthe also

comprizes plateaus intersected by innumerable streams and rivers. As in Brabant, the subsoil contains poorly permeable layers, in this case of glacial boulder clay, so that the landscape – which in the 19th century was also characterized by vast tracts of heathland – is dotted with fens. However, if we base ourselves on historical maps, archival documents, literature and oral history, we find some striking differences in the way in which communities in Drenthe experienced and named the wetlands, and the fens in particular. We seldom encounter bird names, even though the Drenthe fens were no less rich in this respect than the southern Netherlands, and Drenthe also lay on the crane's migration route. Yet, fens with names referring to their appearance (*Lange Veen, Korte Veen, Bolleveen, Eiland Veen*; colour: *Witte Veen, Zwarte Water*, etc.) or which contain a topographical reference (*Noord Veen, Wester Veen*; location near a place: *Zwiggelterplas, Odoornerveen*, etc.) are very common. It is unlikely that the differences in nomenclature relate to different interests on the part of the mappers: these people worked for the same topographical service and were trained for the most part in the same 'school'. Thus the officers and scouts working in Drenthe received the same instructions as those in the southern Netherlands. We can only conclude that the Drenthe communities valued the fens differently and used different ordering principles or 'cultural schemata' from the inhabitants of the southern Netherlands landscape. That the Drenthe and southern Netherlands communities experienced their environment in different ways, despite their economic and social similarities, also emerges from studies of the religious aspects of the landscape in these regions (Kolen, 2006; Roymans *et al.*, 2009).

The examples from the Low Countries show how societies in this part of northwestern Europe have developed quite different ordering principles in similar environments. They ordered the natural world in culturally specific ways, identifying themselves differently with 'their' natural categories. This has also been convincingly argued for other wetlands across Europe and the northern Atlantic (Olwig, 1984; Hatvany, 2009). Thus, for example, Huijbens and Palsson have described how the Icelandic wetlands, seemingly belonging to the most natural and vulnerable of all natural landscapes, are in the end a matter of social formation (this volume). From the 18th century onwards, both the modernist logic of progress and the growing environmentalist fear of loss have to a high degree informed popular thinking, biotopic classification (mainly in terms of vegetation) and the economic utilization of the bogs. By applying visual anthropology and literary criticism, they illustrate the influential role of map-making traditions, cartographic conventions, literature and travel accounts in this process.

All these examples illustrate Descola's observation that human societies use cultural schemes of the relationships between society and nature (plants, animals, rocks, etc.) in constituting their life worlds. However, this observation immediately reveals not just the force of Descola's symbolic ecology, but its limitations. Although Descola explicitly states that the relationships between humans and nature are 'symbolic and material at the same time', he places the primary emphasis on the symbolic organization of the world and the socialization of nature rather than on what he calls the ecology of society – more on internalized topographies than on generic biogeographies (Knight & Rival, 1992, p. 9). Descola suggests that biotopes only become 'real' life worlds when given a meaningful structure by humans. His explicit starting point is 'that conceptions of nature are culturally constructed, that they vary according to cultural and historical determinations, and that, therefore, our own dualistic view of the universe should not be projected as an ontological paradigm onto the many cultures where it does not apply' (Descola, 1996, p. 84). Thus Descola is ultimately concerned with the nature of human ways of world-making rather than the 'ecology of human societies'. From such a perspective, it is obviously only humans who are the authors of biotopes. In this respect the work of Descola, a student of Lévi-Strauss, fits in well with the object of structural anthropology, which is the human mind and its objectifications in social life (Knight & Rival, 1992, p. 10).

Another problem with symbolic ecology is the rather static and general character of the cultural principles that societies supposedly use in structuring or ordering their environment and nature. In the spirit of the Durkheimian tradition, Descola's primary concern also appears to be the realm of durable cultural representations, rather than the ephemeral personal sensations which are indivisible from it (cf. Ingold, 2000, p. 157-162). In this view, individuals order the seemingly formless flux of sensory experiences by using pre-given, cognitive and culturally specific schemata, thus assigning meaning to the world on the basis of shared meanings and values. Consequently, the landscape would then be constructed by the 'mind of society' (Ingold, 2000, p. 157). Ingold has rightly criticized this view by stating that it ignores the dynamic and generic force of personal perceptions of the environment, which are always embedded in bodily action and the execution of concrete tasks (hence his preference for the term 'taskscape' rather than 'landscape'). Similarly, ecologists have recently argued that ecological histories should be studied from the perspective of the individual's interaction with and experience of the environment, rather than documenting the folk taxonomies and general knowledge of

ecosystems that societies have developed collectively and over the long term (Nightingale, 2009).

Taken together, these critiques of symbolic ecology demand that we explore the possibilities of a 'more-than-human' perspective on the interactive and dynamic nature of biotopes (Whatmore, 2006). Such a conception of biotopes should include the ways in which *people* (and not just cultures), together with other human and non-human agents, create and transform biotopes in the context of their daily routines and while realizing their particular life paths. Viewed from such a perspective, cultural categorizations of nature and modes of identification are potentially valuable ingredients for a biographical approach to landscape, but they are only part of the story.

To further explore this idea of personal involvement with biotopes, we will now turn to a small wetland meadow in the Dutch river delta, which borders the Brabant region with marshes, fens and brooks to the north. This example is based on an interesting study by Elings, who recently examined the history of this specific plot of land from a biographical perspective (Elings, 2007).

### The 'Co-Scripting' of Biotopes

Eling's study is about the Loowaard, situated along the river Rhine, not far from the small cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen in the eastern part of the Netherlands. Nowadays the Loowaard is a small wetland biotope. Yet as an archetypal wetland it is surprisingly young. The Loowaard is an example of a relatively new direction in Dutch landscape preservation that aims at the successful 're-wilding' of areas: the reconstruction of the original landscape of the Netherlands, as it supposedly was many thousand years ago, in the time period before human intervention.

Before the reincarnation of its supposedly primeval state, the Loowaard was a typical so-called *uiterwaard* meadow – a foreland in the river landscape, situated between the river's summer bed and the dike that protected the villagers from occasional floods. In the mid-fifteenth century a manorial estate (*havezate*) was built on a rise in the Loowaard. From then on, the Loowaard was used as a meadow by the owners of the estate. It is not my intention, however, to describe the estate's history based on that of its manorial organization and its main landforms, as is common practice in historical geography. Rather, I prefer to review the local landscape's life path by referring to how some of its inhabitants made a living there for themselves, their relatives and other people in the area.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the manorial farm belonged to a noble family with the poetic name of Von Bodelschwing, but the land was leased out to subsequent generations of the Dutch van Sadelhoff family. Jan van Sadelhoff, the last member of this family who lived on the estate in the 19th century, made a complete mess of things (Elings, 2007, p. 92). He was really much more interested in possibilities for exploiting neighbouring fields for brick production, a relatively new branch of industry. For this reason the baron refused to lease the estate to him any longer. Jan Koch, an uncle of Jan van Sadelhoff, was then offered the chance to continue farming the estate in 1847. He seized this opportunity with both hands, stating that he aspired to restore the house, to revitalize the estate's potential for farming and to properly use and maintain the meadows. His son continued farming the estate several years later, doing so entirely in the spirit of his father, as a true farmer.

This son, Jan Willem Conrad Koch (1825-1913) had an extraordinary habit, at least for a farmer of his time. He kept a kind of diary and – in 1902 – he wrote his memoirs in which he described his life history in relation to the landscape and the Loowaard *havezate* (Akkermans, 1991). At first reading, his autobiography perfectly presents the Loowaard as an authored landscape (Elings, 2007). Jan Willem Koch recorded several occasions on which he reshaped or improved parts of the landscape. In 1857, when the summer was hot and dry, water levels in the river were extremely low (Elings, 2007, p. 94). This was hazardous for cattle and horses, as they would sink into the mud while trying to reach the reeds in the riverbed. He therefore proposed digging out the lowest and most dangerous parts, building dams from the mud and planting the dams with trees. This required an investment of 1000 Dutch guilders, an enormous sum at the time, but he earned more than 100% of it in the following ten years by harvesting and selling the coppice. With this remarkable solution, Koch left his own personal mark on this particular spot that would commemorate him long after he was gone. In the preceding summer of 1856 Jan Willem Koch had faced an entirely different problem. He solved it just as effectively, albeit with the help of more than eighty people from two nearby villages. This time the water levels in the river were extremely high, threatening a new dike along the riverbed (Elings, 2007, p. 100-101). Aided by the eighty villagers, Jan Willem and his brother Karel managed to repair the dike and save the *havezate* and the meadows from a catastrophic flood. Afterwards, he and his wife organized a large party on the Loowaard for the villagers, with ham sandwiches and as much beer as people could drink. By commemorating this event, Jan Willem was in a sense expressing his pride in his social skills and his ability to mobilize



Figure 3.5 Jan Willem Koch's "habitat": meadows at the Loowaard with the *havezate*



Photo: Marijke de Both

and organize such a large group of people. Like the thickets and trees, the animals and the saved *havezate*, the dike system could now also be seen as a product of his particular way of working and maintaining the land.

Jan Willem Koch must have embodied the ethical imperative of being a true farmer. Although the life of a farmer demanded an enterprising spirit, he nevertheless saw it as his primary role to continue a family tradition. Guaranteeing the farm's productivity required innovation. Koch therefore didn't hesitate in 1861 to go with the times and to introduce onto the estate a new Anglo-Scottish breed of cattle (Elings, 2007, p. 108-109). Although he managed to secure a valuable steer of this breed, the results were ultimately disappointing. Koch made sure, however, that all these innovations were not too taxing for the land. For him land was not a commodity, but a kind of inalienable possession that was only his on loan. Like a true steward, he had to manage it during his lifetime for the generations that followed. Perhaps he would have gone so far as to say that he was *owned by* the Loowaard, to quote De Coppet (1985), instead of the other way round. He must therefore have regarded it as the greatest defeat of his life when he was forced to give up the farm in 1887 and in so doing 'abandon' the estate (Elings, 2007, p. 13 & p. 19). This step was triggered by the constant rent increases – from 3,300 Dutch guilders in 1847 to more than 10,000 in 1885. This final sum eventually



made it impossible for Koch to complete his mission on the estate. Koch's children, who were born and raised on the Loowaard, were also unable to keep the farm on the *havezate* going for the same reason. They emigrated to North America, where a descendant of Jan Willem Koch would one day become mayor of New York. Jan Willem's son Theodoor founded a Dutch colony in New Holland and later – having suffered major losses in New Holland – the town of Rivera in Kennedy County (Elings, 2007, p. 19).

In Jan Willem Koch's autobiography we learn about the life history of a single person, his family, animals and their special relationship with the wetland meadow. Koch in a sense portrays himself as one of the authors of the estate, and the estate as a constant value and dominant factor in his own life history and that of his family (Elings, 2007). A key word in Koch's involvement with the specific wetland biotope of the Loowaard could have been 'collaboration'. His lifetime achievement resides in his collaboration with other human and non-human agents – such as neighbouring farmers, the Loowaard villagers, his cattle, the soil and plants – to create a life world that was worth living for all of them. From such a perspective, the emphasis shifts from analysing the landscape as an ecological habitat to studying it as a habitus that is both socially informed and ecologically determined at the same time.

How humans and non-human animals together make a shared life world – which is the definition of 'biotope' I have adopted in this chapter – is also well-illustrated by the geographer Hayden Lorimer in a fascinating study of a reindeer herd on the Cairngorm highlands of Scotland (Lorimer, 2006). In 1952, reindeer were reintroduced to the area from northern Sweden via Narvik on the Norwegian coast. This all started with the shared vision of Mikel Utsi, a Lappish emigrant from the northernmost part of Sweden, and Ethel John Lindgren, an American (but Cambridge-based) anthropologist of Swedish descent. The reintroduction of the animals became much more than an ecological experiment as the intimate relations between the two men and the charismatic animals occupied their lives until their death in 1979 (Utsi's) and 1988 (Lindgren's). While living together and establishing a shared feeling for the lie of the land (Lorimer, 2006, p. 498), long-lasting companionships grew between the individual members of the herd, thereby reanimating the local landscape in very personal ways. We can easily imagine that the southern Netherlands landscape was constantly reanimated in similar ways in the 19th century by the living together of shepherds and sheep, farmers and cattle. In these cases, as in that of the Loowaard, collaboration might once again be the key word for understanding the continuous reshaping of the landscape.

## From Dikes and Dams to Disasters

In the discussion on nature categorizations we saw that some forms of cultural relativism can easily become forms of cultural determinism. It is true that even environmental catastrophes, like floods or the rapid desertification of landscapes, are only really catastrophes if people are there to perceive and categorize them as such. Moreover, at least since the industrial revolution (or maybe even earlier), all environmental catastrophes have had a human component in the sense that they are induced or influenced by human activities and interventions in the landscape. But all this does not make catastrophes less real in a 'more-than-human' world.

In about AD 1000, the inhabitants of the river villages in the Netherlands began building embankments along major rivers like the Rhine and Meuse (Van de Ven, 1993; Renes, 2005; Barends *et al.*, 2010). Along with the villages themselves, fields and gardens occupied the highest parts of the banks, while the slopes down to the flood basins behind the banks were used as communal meadows and pastureland. Land use in the low-lying basins was very much dictated by the changing seasons. In summer, the highest parts could still be used to a degree to graze livestock, but in winter the now submerged basins were hardly used at all, other than as a route across the ice to neighbouring villages. In the period from AD 800 to 1250, towns in the Dutch river area expanded significantly and there was growing demand for agricultural products. To satisfy this demand, the agricultural land area had to be extended to the low-lying peat areas and river basins. But before these areas could be drained and reclaimed, embankments had to be built along the river courses and any obstructing ones had to be dammed. Several centuries later, the still remaining open spaces between the village embankments were closed off and long, uninterrupted dikes were built. This process was completed in most parts of the Dutch delta by about AD 1300. Inside the dikes, where in winter especially the river water was sometimes dammed up to a significant extent, river forelands like the Loowaard were created.

Thus over the course of five centuries, from AD 1000 to 1500, the Dutch delta changed dramatically. It was transformed from an open delta where the rivers had free reign and where large areas were taken up by fens and marshes to a tightly ordered agricultural territory with sea dikes, river dikes, artificially modified waterways and polders under human control. This was a landscape that had to fulfil all the hydrological and managerial requirements for optimum exploitation by humans for their agricultural purposes, requirements that were neatly tested and monitored at both the local and regional level. On a local scale this task was taken care of by the villagers,

Figure 3.6 Typical Dutch river landscape around 1950 with meadows (uiterwaarden), closed dikes and brick factories (background)



Photo by Cas Oorthuys, a well-known Dutch landscape photographer

and on a regional scale by the newly established Dutch *waterschappen*, or water boards, the central bodies of surveyors who were responsible for maintaining river dikes and who organized the dike enclosures around the villages, fields, meadows and backswamps.

With their far-reaching interventions such as dike building, the human authors of the Dutch river landscapes unconsciously reset the environmental agenda for themselves. In the long run, their reshaping of wetlands and stream valleys had unexpected repercussions. The construction of dams and closed dike systems forced the river into an artificial straitjacket. This severely restricted the river's sedimentation area, causing a continuous

uplifting of the riverbed within the narrow space between the dikes. By contrast, the polders alongside rivers were vulnerable to soil subsidence as a result of being systematically drained and pumped dry with the aid of drainage ditches, horsepower (early on) and windmills and pumping plants (at a later stage). This increased still further the height difference between river courses and adjacent land, so that dike breaches had ever more serious consequences over the centuries and flooding inflicted ever greater damage on river villages, livestock and arable land. Between 1750 and 1800 alone, more than 152 dikes along the major rivers in the central Netherlands were breached during various floods. The *waterschappen* responded by taking new measures and making dikes higher and stronger, unaware that occasional floods would now have an even more catastrophic effect.

Farmers like Jan Willem Koch had to cope with the consequences of all these human interventions. The building of dams and dikes was planned and organized carefully by the local communities and regional *waterschappen* as a collective undertaking, although of course the actual planning and reshaping of the landscape always remained the work of countless individuals whose particular roles did matter – the ‘nobodies in particular’ of Marwyn Samuels (1979, p. 52). However, the accumulated and unforeseen effects of all these actions infiltrated into ‘the here-and-now’ of Koch’s small personal life world more than five centuries later. Although Koch was a true practitioner in de Certeau’s sense, his activities were partly framed by the choices made by previous generations. Koch himself did all this on a smaller scale. He reflected on the problems and potentials of his landscape, planned strategies to solve the problems he encountered, and occasionally mobilized and supervised others to carry out his plans, in this way shaping the environmental settings for generations to come (Elings, 2007). The vegetations, landforms and technical solutions that were ‘produced’ by Koch outlived him, generated their own dynamics in interaction with other human and non-human agents, and were incorporated into the encompassing rhythm of the climate, river and seasons. This reminds us that the landscape is co-created, transformed and transmitted not only by living organisms, but also by technologies, which now and then tend to lead their own lives.

## Conclusion

Our excursions to Mannahatta in around 1600 and the 19th-century fenlands and river landscapes of the Netherlands demonstrated that biotopes, even the seemingly most natural of all landscapes, are always the collaborative work

of human and non-human authors. But landscapes also react. Landscapes are landscaping us as much as we are designing and building them. This doesn't mean that there is a metaphysical power at work outside or above the authors of the landscape, but that we should consider path-dependent trajectories that evolve over time, with an effective history that is not just 'past tense' but that is somehow alive and effective in our present-day environment (and which doesn't stay present-day, but keeps on affecting the landscape in the future).

The solutions of later human generations to the environmental problems created by earlier generations show the decisive role of coping in the reshaping of landscapes. Ingold once remarked that the landscape, '[a]s the familiar domain of our dwelling, [is] *with* us, not *against* us' (Ingold, 2000, p. 191). This phenomenological statement denies, however, the ecological and social dimensions of coping that all landscapes embody. As a biotope in the literal sense – as a place where humans, non-human animals and other organisms must find ways to live together – the landscape is not always with *us*. Landscapes don't always change in harmonious and balanced ways, and their changes certainly don't always appear 'familiar' to their dwellers. This is so because the life history of landscapes is as much generic *for* as it is the dynamic interim product *of* the lives and works of its countless inhabitants. This underlines the starting point of biographical approaches, which is that landscapes create their own path-dependent trajectories at different time and spatial scales in this interactive process.

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## 4 Automobile Authorship of Landscapes

A Biographical Vignette of Iceland's Interior

*Edward Huijbens & Karl Benediktsson*

### Abstract

The highland interior of Iceland is a landscape transformed by practices of automotive travel. In this chapter we trace the authorship of this landscape through some biographical accounts of those who established such practices in the first half of the 20th century. We relate this history to dilemmas that are evident in the present, concerning land use and politics of nature. At the heart of these dilemmas are certain constructions of the 'freedom to travel' that sit somewhat uneasily with conservation sensibilities. Landscape biography and the notion of authorship enable a fuller understanding of such controversies than a simple mapping of interests and stakeholders.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, Iceland, superjeeps, travel, authorship

### Introduction

On the road map you won't drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine it, you just might (Massey, 2005, p. 111).

[L]andscapes without authors would be like books without writers. They too might exist, but only as bindings filled with empty pages (Samuels, 1979, pp. 64-65).

In landscape studies, the idea of 'biography' originates in American geography (Samuels, 1979) and was primarily concerned with biographies of individual people in the (not-too-distant) past and the influence of their decisions and actions upon the landscape (see also Meredith, 1985). A biography of a landscape therefore directs attention to lives lived – not only to land formed by 'forces' of various kinds or gazed at with human eyes. Landscape biography, thus conceived, implies an entanglement of multiple personal histories with the ways in which places and spaces are enacted and that which enables this enactment.



Landscapes are thus never fully comprehensible from any one perspective, however informed that perspective might be. To paraphrase anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000), landscapes are worlds-in-formation, never completed but deeply implicated in the life histories of those who inhabit them:

The landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves (Ingold, 1993, p. 152).

While a biography of a landscape thus clearly has affinities with a more general phenomenological approach to landscape (Ingold, 1993; Benediktsson and Lund, 2010), there are certain important differences. Phenomenology focuses on the lived world of concurrent experiences, whereas a biography entails an historical account, allowing for a longer time perspective. Following Roymans *et al.* (2009), the direction a landscape biography may take depends partially on the time-depth of the analysis. In addition, as a landscape is composed of a myriad of individual life stories, using the biography metaphor for understanding the *longue-durée* temporality of landscape departs considerably from the emphasis on individual biographies (cf. Bergson, 2001; Braudel, 1958). Through a myriad of life stories with varying time-depths of analysis, the coupling of archaeology and historical geography with the study of current landscapes is allowed for (Kolen, 2005, p. 14 and 18). More profoundly, the comprehension of landscapes in the biographical account does not adhere to a linear chronology of intersecting life histories, since a landscape is to be described as a plenum, i.e. an all-encompassing entity. Biography in this sense thus entails the ‘idea of a coexistence of very different “durations,” superior or inferior to “ours,” all of them in communication’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 238). Two types of duration are distinguishable, ‘... one qualitative and fusional, continuous, the other numerical and homogenous, discrete’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 484). The biographical account of the plenary landscape calls attention to precisely the qualitative, fusional and continuous nature of differing durations. Thus landscapes are allowed to remain plural and contested throughout the history of their making. In this sense the landscape

[...] does not refer to an extant thing but rather the context or the background against which particular things show up and take on significance: a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances (Anderson and Harrison, 2010, p. 8).

In this chapter, the idea of landscape biography is put to work through a description of an important landscape change in Iceland. This is the transformation of the central interior of the island from a landscape of fear and loathing into one of desire and reverence. This relatively recent transmutation was greatly facilitated through the actions, practices and performances of certain individuals who 'opened up' the interior for travel and tourism. This 'authorship', as we would like to conceive it, can to a large extent be attributed to the vehicles and their transmutations. This brings about a twofold approach in our chapter. Firstly, as we stay relatively close in time in this chapter, we harken back somewhat to geographer Marwyn Samuels's (1979) original ideas behind landscape biographies, with focus on the 'situated life stories' that are the 'point[s] of intersection of the mediating categories time and space' (Simonsen, 1991, p. 430). Similar to Samuels's original proposal, we want to elucidate an important aspect of the popular tourist destination that is today's Iceland, by tracing the crossings between human lives and the land itself, both the 'landscapes of impression' (Samuels, 1979) that animated travel practices and the 'landscapes of expression' that were worked and reworked by these practices. Secondly, we will weave into these situated life stories that which makes possible the practices of key persons. Here we draw on the relations of those 'trailblazers' whose stories we recount, with the vehicles they used, and the capacities bestowed upon them through those vehicles.

We demonstrate the landscape manifestations of these practices through maps. With these we show how roads and tracks constitute the highland interior of Iceland, authored by several trailblazers through time. However, in realisation of landscape's plenary nature, we show how these roads and tracks remain contested and thus how this is a map never completed but ongoing. It is a map on which travellers could suddenly find themselves lost.

### **Engaging with the Highlands**

Iceland's settlement is for the most part confined to the coast and lowlands; the interior is largely an uninhabited highland plateau. These highlands have become the stage for an increasingly intense struggle over resource use (Benediktsson, 2007 & 2008; Thórhallsdóttir, 2007a, b; Sæþórsdóttir, 2010), where interests of hydropower, domestic and international tourism, and nature conservation all lay claims to the area. Human technological capacity has facilitated an ever-increasing material impact of these activities and they have become a conspicuous part of the landscape in many places.

This has not always been so. The first part of the 20th century was pivotal for the ways in which the biography of the highland interior of Iceland has developed. Before the 1920s the highland landscapes were not subjected to great human impact – except for the drastic decline in vegetation resulting at least in part from a long history of grazing. These landscapes did not figure prominently at all in the spatial imaginings of Icelanders of their own country, although they had been traversed frequently during some periods in Iceland's history. By the 17th century they had become more or less *terra incognita*; wilderness deemed useless and dangerous (Benediktsson, 2000). This set the tone for the perception of the highlands as wilderness as geographers Anna Dóra Sæþórsdóttir, C. Michael Hall and Jarkko Saarinen (2011) recount. They state that

[T]he wilderness of Iceland is nowadays perhaps more a subjective and social *idea* than a *reality* in a natural science sense. Nevertheless, the idea of wilderness and its social construction remain important as part of the cultural economy of the Highlands and the country as a whole (Sæþórsdóttir *et al.*, 2011, p. 269).

The transmutation of the central interior into a 'wilderness region' for travel and tourism did not only rest upon changed ideological associations, however, but also visceral, material, mutual encounters between people and landscapes. The first winds of change regarding direct engagements with the interior came with the arrival of Enlightenment ideals in Iceland in the middle of the 18th century, although the precise geography of the highlands remained largely unknown (Sigurðsson, 1990). Late in the 19th century, natural scientists started travelling through the highlands to gather data in order to fill in the blank spaces on the map. The most significant of these was Þorvaldur Þoroddsen, a geographer whose prolific writings brought his first-hand knowledge of the interior to the attention of the nation. Some of his writings bear witness to the ambivalence that characterised attitudes towards these landscapes:

A solemn silence reigns in Iceland's highest and harshest wilderness areas; no sound is heard except that of water in the gullies and of the blowing wind; the birds fly silently across; they have no reason to dwell there and speed across the desert. One can say that nature is dead and fossilised... (Þoroddsen, 1908, p. 165).

Scientific curiosity may have spurred Þoroddsen's exploration of the highlands, but his description here speaks to a certain aesthetic sensibility:

that of the sublime. That sensibility had for a century been an increasingly prominent part of the cultural construction of the highlands and was central to their emergence as a travel destination some decades later.

In 1927 the Touring Club of Iceland (*Ferðafélag Íslands*) was established by a group of prominent men in Reykjavík. Modelled on similar establishments in other countries, the club's central aim was to inform Icelanders about their own country and encourage them to travel, not least in those parts that were not well known to the public (Lerner, 2006). This included the highlands, where the club established simple tourist huts in several places, promoted certain routes and supported the building of cairns – an age-old 'landscaping' practice – to aid in wayfinding. Nationalist sentiments building towards Iceland's independence in 1944 added further strength to rationalist impulses to explore and chart the highlands, and dovetailed nicely with romantic ideas about travelling into the wilderness in order to experience solitude and test the limits of oneself against the forces of sublime nature. One of the first leaders of the club, Björn Ólafsson, wrote:

The task of the Touring Club is to make the Icelandic nation aware of the country's beautiful and powerful nature. [...] The nation gets its temperament from the land. But some are stuck in the gravel [i.e. in the urban settlements] and others in remote valleys. The influence of the land is therefore uneven and it becomes one-sided (Ólafsson, 1932, quoted in Lerner, 2006, p. 28).

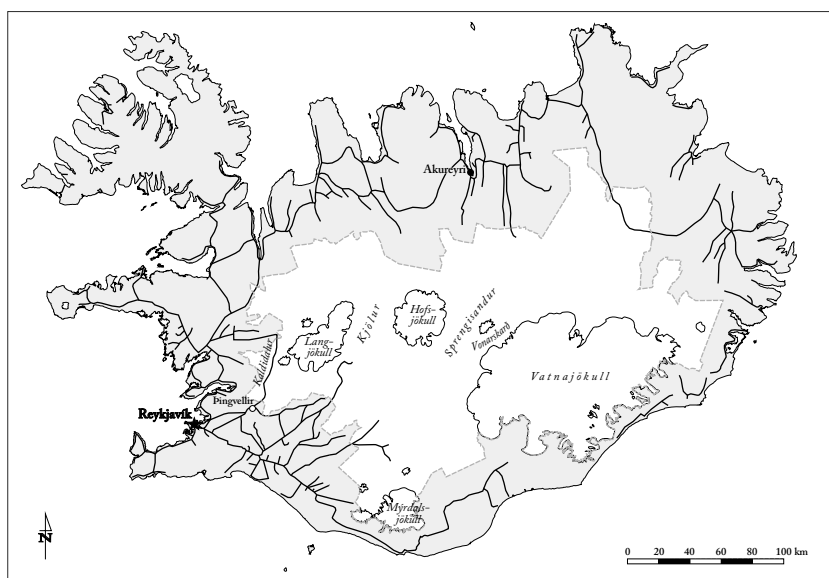
Travelling out of the everyday environment – to other settled regions but even more into the interior – was thus seen as a character-building exercise that would help in developing not only a love for the land, but in producing loyal subjects in a country that was heading towards full independence.

Apart from the handful of tourist huts the highland landscapes themselves were not much affected materially by these developments. However, they coincided with the advent of automobile travel. With the automobile, the aforementioned ideological construction of the highland interior gathered pace intensively. The new travel technology enabled a relatively small group of young men to establish their 'authorship' over the area. Over the period of some two decades, from 1930 to 1950, they laid out the tracks that have since directed the engagement of most travellers with the highlands. The concept of 'path dependency' – recently brought into landscape studies (Mahoney, 2000; Palang *et al.*, 2011) – seems particularly apposite. And here personal biographies are useful and indeed necessary for understanding the landscape biography itself. We will now look closer at the personalities, motives and practices that were involved.

## Establishing Authorship

The automobile arrived in Iceland – then an almost entirely roadless country, by the way – in 1904, but the technology only showed itself to be viable a decade or so later (Sigurðsson and Bjarnason, 2003). Initial roadbuilding efforts were naturally enough mostly confined to the settled lowlands (figure 4.1). The first highland route made passable for motor vehicles was the Kaldidalur route in West Iceland, opened by the Roads Administration in 1929 (Víðis, 2003). This was done in preparation for the 1000-year anniversary of Alþingi (the Icelandic parliament) in 1930, as the route had historically connected the West of the country to the fields of parliament at Þingvellir. Reaching an altitude of more than 700 m a.s.l. and only open during the summer months, this primitive mountain road was for some years the only connection for motorised travel between the southwest and the west and north of Iceland. The other major routes between the south and the north were gradually explored and opened up, although the presence of large glacial rivers substantially hampered travel.

Figure 4.1 The Icelandic road system in 1936



Most roads were only passable during summer. The central highland area is demarcated as in planning documents from 1999. The roads were digitized by Victoria Frances Taylor from a published road map (Scale: 1: 1 000 000). Map made by Karl Benediktsson

In 1930 the first attempt was made to cross Kjölur, an old route between the westernmost two of the large ice caps of central Iceland, Langjökull and Hofsjökull. The four young men who took part in the expedition all knew the basics of the route, having crossed it on horseback before (Víðis, 2003). The vehicle – a three-year old Ford – was not powerful enough (Magnússon, 1975) and the group turned back to the south having finished only the first third or so of the distance. But they had gained some first-hand knowledge of the varying conditions found in the landscapes of the highlands. Driving through stretches of reasonably flat ground covered by gravel and sand was easy, but the rough and rocky terrain of other stretches made car travel very difficult, as well as the muddy patches where remnants of vegetation were to be found.

With this experience the group of four started to prepare an even more audacious project: to cross Iceland at the very centre, between Vatnajökull and Hofsjökull. This route, known as Sprengisandur, was much less travelled than the Kjölur route, but sheep farmers provided information to fill in the substantial gaps still found on existing maps. In 1932 a first attempt was made, but it was not successful. A year later, in 1933, however, the first traverse of Sprengisandur was completed. The large river of Tungnaá was a particularly difficult obstacle, but a ferry stationed there for farmers provided a flimsy but workable solution. The group took some six days to complete the 250 km or so between the lowland farms at the northern and southern ends. Even though travelling in August, they encountered all kinds of weather *en route*, including fairly heavy snowfall, and judging by the standards of later times, this seems to have been a foolhardy undertaking indeed. Be that as it may: it gave the four men a formidable reputation in a nation that was rapidly developing a taste for the automobile as a way to not only get from A to B, but to experience the country's varied landscapes as tourists.

Two of the travel companions on this first automobile crossing had grown up on farms in the south of Iceland, at the very edge of the interior plateau. Their own biographies had thus been intertwined with that of these landscapes since childhood. One of these, Sigurður Jónsson frá Laug, had been instrumental in getting the Kaldidalur route cleared. The other, Einar Magnússon, was involved in the establishment of Iceland Travel (*Ferðaskrifstofa Íslands*) in 1932 (Magnússon, 1975). The aim was to make travels for foreigners in Iceland more affordable, so that they would not have to hire a large group of horses and assistants to venture beyond Reykjavík and the immediate southwest. This was one of the reasons for undertaking the journey, although mostly it seems to have been their own youthful

enthusiasm and willingness to test the limits of a new and unproven technology that was the driving force.

After this bold claim to the automobile authorship of the highlands, nothing much happened for a decade or more. While successful, the adventurous traverse had actually clearly shown the limits of the new technology of mobility in these unforgiving landscapes. Being rear-wheel-drive only and with a rather impotent engine, the Ford had been pushed as much as driven, and clearly this was not going to be a viable way for travelling in the interior. This was to change radically with the introduction of new vehicles during World War II (Sigurðsson and Bjarnason, 2003). British armed forces occupied the country in 1940, to be superseded by US forces in 1941. With the forces came two new types of vehicles with four-wheel drive: the light and agile Jeeps and heavier weapon-carrier trucks. Their off-road capacity did of course not go unnoticed by Icelanders. At the end of the war, many army jeeps and trucks found their way into Icelandic hands. Two of the new owners, Guðmundur Jónasson and Páll Arason, were to become especially important figures in the biography of the highlands.

Páll Arason (1915-2011) was an illustrious figure in many respects. Born in North Iceland, he became a keen nature enthusiast in his teens and wanted to pursue studies in natural history. The Great Depression put his personal biography on a different track, however, as the family could not afford to support his education (Hjálmarsson, 1994). Eventually he moved to Reykjavík to seek work as a driver, but in the 1940s he started travelling in the northern highlands together with a group of friends. One trip in particular – a hiking trip to the remote Askja volcano in the northeastern interior – seems to have been a revelatory experience. The volcanic caldera and its environs became a landscape of deep impression:

From that moment, I always had this desire to travel in the mountains and deserted areas. It was as if I had caught a bacterial infection I could not get rid of (quoted in Hjálmarsson, 1994, p. 134).

Páll became an ardent explorer of the highlands, on foot and on horseback. As he put it himself, 'the wilderness got hold of me' (Arason, 1975, p. 59). At the end of the war he bought one of the army trucks and started a career as a tour operator, the first of several such operators who over the next ten to fifteen years changed the map of the highlands radically. His first tours were into the northern highlands and over Sprengisandur to the south, where tourists were carried over the river Tungnaá in a boat.



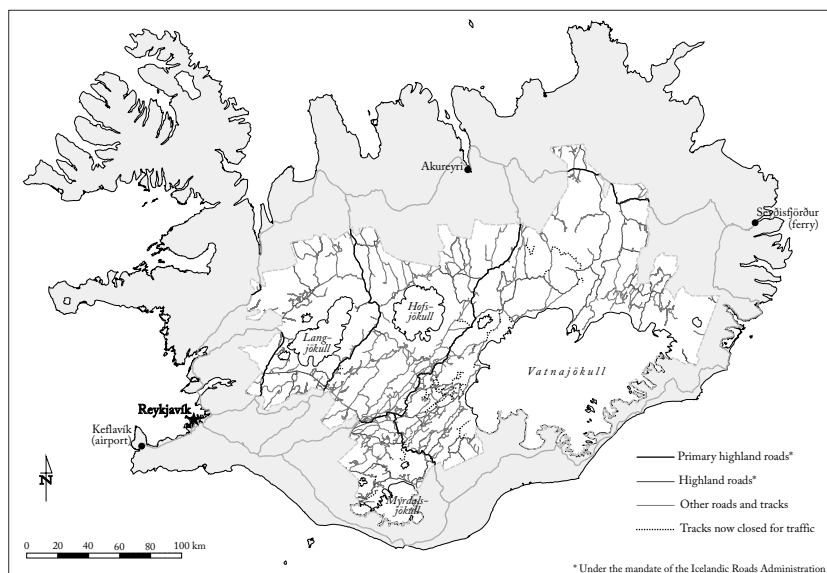
An even more important actor and landscape author was Guðmundur Jónasson (1909-1986), who founded a travel operation that still carries his name. His empire started with him buying a Dodge ¾-ton army truck in 1946, fitted out for carrying ten passengers. More trucks were soon added. What Guðmundur is still remembered for, however, is his discovery of a passable (albeit tricky) ford over the aforementioned large and fast-flowing Tungnaá. With this, the main obstacle for north-south crossings of the interior was removed. What followed was the rapid development of the so-called 'highland safari' – a round tour of the highlands, with tent accommodation and full catering *en route*. The customers were both domestic and foreign for the first years, but Icelanders themselves gradually took to travelling on their own rather than with these organised tours.

The travel of locals was also facilitated through the introduction of civilian models of the light army jeeps, developed by their American producers immediately after the war, with other car manufacturers developing their own versions. Most notable of these was the British Land Rover. The Soviet GAZ 69 also entered the stage in 1953. All these vehicles were imported to Iceland in large numbers. Farmers bought them; country doctors who had to serve large and difficult areas also acquired them. In short, they provided an ideal solution to travel in a country with a road network that was still quite primitive, even in the settled lowlands (figure 4.1). Concomitantly, these vehicles became the basis for a veritable explosion in offroad travel as they became increasingly available to people. Finding new routes became a popular sport inspired by the efforts of the trailblazers and often without much deliberation beforehand:

We often did not make a travel plan at all when we reached the highlands, but drove according to what the eye saw and what chance offered (Ólafsson, 1975, p. 173).

The inevitable result was that a network of jeep tracks soon crisscrossed the interior (figure 4.2). In a way, this entailed a 'democratization of travel' – in order to experience the varied landscapes of the highlands it was no longer necessary to organise costly expeditions, whether they entailed horses and guides as in former times or group tours in large, specialised trucks. Mountain travel became a popular pastime, at least for a segment of the population. Certain places in the highlands began to attract an increasing number of visitors. Among them were the geothermal locations Hveravellir (on the Kjölur route) and Landmannalaugar in the southern highlands.



**Figure 4.2** Roads and tracks in the interior of Iceland at present

Main connections of the highland network with the Ring Road around Iceland are shown. Map made by Karl Benediktsson, based on data from the National Land Survey of Iceland

## Machines and Morality

With the developments described above, the budding aspirations of Icelanders with regard to the highland interior were greatly intensified. In effect, a new chapter had been opened up in the biography of the highland landscapes, with the help of the technology of automobility. This has complex implications for the landscape politics of today. After the novelty phase of the new technology, the situation remained relatively stable for some decades. Farmers and jeep owners in towns accumulated more and more knowledge of the vehicles, their possibilities and limitations.

For a good part of the year, the conditions in Iceland – especially in the highlands – are marked by the presence of snow. In addition, more than a tenth of the country is covered by glaciers. For a long time these conditions precluded the use of ordinary automobiles. Building on the particular ‘travel culture’ of exploration and freedom that had been brought about by the developments described above, some 4WD enthusiasts started modifying their vehicles in order to be able to drive on snow and ice. The basics were simple: ordinary jeeps were fitted out with extra-wide tyres and, when driving on snow, air was let out of the tyres, thereby enlarging the ‘footprint’ of the vehicles and allowing

them to float on snow. The original trial-and-error experimentation developed into sophisticated technical innovation, and eventually the 'superjeep' was born (Huijbens and Benediktsson, 2007 & 2009). Since the late 1980s, this has been the vehicle of choice for the most dedicated wilderness travellers, and has also become an important part of commercial tourist services.

Not only did the superjeep lead to the conquering of the 'final frontier' – the ice caps that had hitherto been out of reach for all but specialised snowmobiles – but it also spurred a new and popular sport: winter off-road driving. Suddenly, virtually all of Iceland's landscapes had been claimed by automobile authorship – the whole of the interior was open and ripe for exploration and the experience of freedom.

Apart from the modified superjeeps, a great number of more mundane vehicles populates Icelandic roads. Today Iceland has one of the world's highest rates of automobile ownership per capita (Collin-Lange and Benediktsson, 2011), unmodified jeeps and/or SUVs that can handle conditions beyond the tarmac forming a prominent part of the fleet. This adds to the number of domestic highland travellers, potential and actual. Moreover, the number of international tourists has grown rapidly (Jóhannesson *et al.*, 2010). In addition to the organised group tours, they too have moved towards more

**Figure 4.3** Prepared for war? Austrian ex-army truck in the Icelandic landscape



Photo: Karl Benediktsson

independent modes of travel, either in rental cars (including small jeeps or SUVs) or in their own vehicles brought over on the ferry from mainland Europe. In fact, the most extreme vehicles seen in the highland landscapes in summer tend to be those of Continental European tourists (figure 4.3).

Concerns over the environmental impact of these travel practices have gradually increased. Whereas no questions seem to have been asked at first about the impact of vehicle tracks on the delicate vegetation and soils, this has since become a major worry. Each summer the media carry news of some careless and clueless tourists whose vehicles have sunk up to the axles in soft pits of mud – or worse still, in the scarce and precious patches of vegetation still found in the highlands – with voluntary rescue squads having to get them out of the mess. Such incidents incite moral indignation, but while ‘off-road driving’ is strictly forbidden by law (unless the ground is frozen and covered by snow), the culpable drivers almost never have to face up to their responsibility in court. The reason is that the very definition of a road is not all too clear in Icelandic legislation. In this way, the eulogized biographies of those who established their authorship of these landscapes in the middle of the 20th century have come back to haunt the nation. Carried over into the present, the past practices of automobility provide the grounds for today’s complex and contradictory politics of landscape.

### Conservation, Authority and Authorship

As mentioned above, the interior of Iceland has become a contested landscape, where groups and people who conceptualise nature in very different ways engage in often fierce ‘tournaments of value’, to use anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s (1986) memorable phrase. Far from being a *terra incognita*, it is now for increasing numbers of people a source of scenic enjoyment, mental stimulation, national identity, natural purity, economic significance, or all of those.

The particular mode of engaging with the highland landscapes that is embodied in the culture of 4WD travel relates to these contests in a way that brings its own contradictions into play. First, jeep travel is lauded as an effective and democratic way for the ordinary Icelander to enjoy and appreciate these landscapes. Iceland is a country with a strong Nordic tradition of public access rights to land (*almannaréttur*) and the phrase ‘freedom to travel’ (*ferðafrelsi*) has become used to highlight what the protagonists of 4WD travel see as a basic right – to be able to drive (almost) anywhere they like. Concerns with the negative impact of driving off-track in delicate nature have been met through education and campaigns organised for example by

the '4x4 Touring Club' (*Ferðaklúbburinn 4x4*), established in 1983 (Snæland, 2008). The jeep – especially the superjeep, being a source of national pride as an example of successful innovation – can be seen as contributing, in a modern and motorised way, to the nation-building project that was at the heart of the formation of the travel clubs in the 1920s and 1930s.

Second, increasing environmental sensibilities have contributed to the designation of more protected areas – national parks and nature reserves – and the enlargement of existing ones. This relates to domestic and international tourism in a double-edged manner: increasing tourist numbers bring the need for careful management into focus, but local hopes for boosting tourism are sometimes a very prominent reason for establishing new protected areas. In any case, ideas of the purified 'wilderness' that have been part of the environmental movement for a long time have influenced protected area planning. In addition, the SUV has of course become an emblem in environmental circles for the unsustainable excesses of the consumer society (Vanderheiden, 2006). Managing the accessibility of motor vehicles – reining in the jeeps – has become one of the main issues in conservation planning, as will be discussed further below.

Last but not least, the building of hydropower stations in the highlands has become a hugely divisive issue. And also here there is a fraught relation with jeep culture. The research necessary for the exploitation of the hydropower research, and the building of the dams and power stations themselves, has been assisted greatly by jeep technology. It is no coincidence that the parts of the highlands with the highest density of tracks are those where most of the power stations are located, namely in the Þjórsá-Tungnaá area in the central south (cf. figure 4.2). Needless to say, the views of conservationists and the hydropower industry have diverged considerably on these matters.

All these aspects of jeep culture add their own storylines to the biography of the highland landscapes and, if further excavated, would undoubtedly reveal a host of authors and the ways in which they engaged with the highland landscapes in past, present and future. One particular recent development intrigues us in the context of this chapter. We bring it up here as a small example of how the landscape of the highlands is being authored under the auspices of the technological assemblage of the jeep, inspired by those who introduced this travel mode and left the first tracks. This is the debate around what constitutes a 'road'. It relates to the current effort of creating a legislative setup that covers the highland interior in a comprehensive manner. The first major task in this effort has been to establish ownership of the highland interior. To this end, the government has been pursuing a litigation process with landowners around the country, establishing the

exact boundaries of the part of the highland interior that is publically owned (*þjóðlenda*). At the same time, the National Land Survey of Iceland has been trying to establish which of the tracks, established through the years, should be shown on the map as vehicular roads. Here the aforementioned tensions between conservationists and those wanting to harness the energy potential of the highlands become evident. The former, enjoying the support of the government in power at the time when this was written, are laying claims to ever greater expanses of the highland interior and designating them as nature reserves and/or national parks. These areas are to be subjected to regulations and rules of travel, in effect limiting vehicular traffic through zoning and land use planning in favour of other modes of recreation deemed more sustainable and less harmful for vegetation and soil.

Here the recent planning of Vatnajökull National Park, designated in 2008 and Europe's largest national park, is a case in point. As part of its first conservation plan, several tracks were singled out for permanent closure, some of which had been in use for decades. This was met by an outcry by the 4x4 Touring Club and other enthusiasts of this mode of travel. On October 2, 2010, members of this club rallied in their superjeeps to a mountain pass in the highlands, Vonarskarð (which translates as 'the Pass of Hope'), for protest. The first truck crossed this pass already in 1950. The protest group raised a hefty steel cross at the highest point (figure 4.4).

Replacing the Christian INRI on the cross were the numbers 874-2010, representing Iceland's 'official' year of settlement (874 AD) on the one hand, and on the other the year marking the passing of freedom to travel, according to the protesters. The National Park Board had announced earlier in the year that the route through the pass would be closed to motorised traffic. The 4x4 Touring Club members, along with other associations of outdoor recreationists, oppose such unilateral top-down management directives and claim that the main threat to the wilderness quality of the highland interior stems from the development of hydro- and geothermal power facilities. They thus claim in effect that outdoor recreation has become trapped between those keen to develop the energy potential of the highland interior for the continued industrialisation of Iceland through the introduction of multinationally-owned aluminium smelters, and those who want to push particular notions of wilderness in the highlands. What is intriguing is the fact that those in jeeps and other forms of motorized vehicles and those making direct use of the landscapes (e.g. through hunting and fishing) have joined forces with those using the landscape for recreation and touring, in opposition to the conservation efforts. The former group wants the highlands to remain open for all kinds of travel at all times.

**Figure 4.4** The funeral of the freedom to travel at the Pass of Hope



Photo: Björn Böðvarsson. Reprinted with permission

In diverse and sometimes contradictory ways, therefore, the authorship of the highland landscapes as wilderness in the minds of today's Icelanders is intimately related to the history of automotive technology and the cultures of travel fostered by it. Indeed, media researcher Melissa Aronczyk (2005, p. 1) has stated that '[w]ithout cars, wilderness as we know it could not exist'.

### Concluding Remarks

Drawing on vignettes from the situated life stories of those who blazed the highland trails of Iceland's interior, we have sought to establish the ways in which these life stories inform and animate the on-going biography of the country's landscapes. Through the mobile affordances of the jeep as its technology has developed, more and more areas have been opened up to the 'freedom of travel'. This very notion now finds itself pitched in a battle of survival with competing trajectories of development. All these diverse material and mental constructions compose what is the highland interior of this subarctic island today. They are simultaneously landscapes of impression and expression (cf. Samuels, 1979).

Whilst contradictory at first glance, those arguing for the ‘freedom to travel’ to get into contact with Iceland and appreciate its landscapes do so in jeeps on tracks laid down by a number of pioneers. These again drew on the knowledge of local farmers and shepherds. But what this contradiction reveals to us is that a biographical approach lends itself well to studies of landscape history that are increasingly being called upon as support for planning and management of landscape (Palang *et al.*, 2011). Knowledge produced through the history of automobile practices is thus not constituted by a history following a determined path to the present, but by a history which is worked through a myriad of life stories at different times, conditioned by the different technologies and material conditions of each time, in this case facilitating different modes of travel. A biographical approach thus allows a more insightful and historically conscious understanding of the present-day situation and its difficult controversies than a direct and simple mapping of interests and stakeholders, such as commonly employed in landscape and environmental management.

Today, the myths that have developed around individual travel biographies are being translated into a particular form of the freedom to travel. The landscapes of the highland interior are being animated as spaces of automotive freedom. With legislative pressures to regulate the planning of land use in the highlands, including roads and other infrastructure, those drawing on the biographies of the trailblazers feel their freedom curtailed. The map displayed in figure 4.2 gives a hint of the current state of the biography of Iceland’s interior. Efforts are constantly being made to freeze time and hold on to a landscape of yesteryear. However, those advocating the freedom of automotive travel want to be able to ‘drive off the map’ and continue as the authors of their own biographical trajectories. And with it they claim authorship over the highland landscape.

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# 5 Authenticity, Artifice and the Druidical Temple of Avebury

*Mark Gillings & Joshua Pollard*

## **Abstract**

This paper engages with the legacy of a prehistoric monument – the Avebury henge, in southern England – and the influential work of an early antiquarian – William Stukeley. We highlight how the reception of Stukeley’s 1743 work, *Abury: a temple of the British druids*, has structured images of Avebury and shaped the authenticity claims of later scholars, artists and religious groups. In biographical terms, Stukeley’s carefully crafted *Abury* has possessed a very active afterlife, its status shifting from that of primary record (of Avebury), to a form of constructional-blueprint (for Avebury), to a partial and flawed primary record (of an Avebury), only to end up for some as an unassailable and definitive record (of *the* Avebury). At the centre of this narrative is the status of *Abury* as a material agent around which various authenticity claims have been constructed.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, Avebury, William Stukeley, Alexander Keiller, authenticity, Druids

## **Writing a Biography**

The prehistoric stone circle complex at Avebury on the Wiltshire chalkland of southern England is the largest of its kind in Europe (figure 5.1). A 420-metre-diameter earthwork encloses a ring of huge standing stones, which in turn encloses two other roughly circular configurations of megaliths with further stone settings at their centres. Radiating out to the south and west are linear avenues of megaliths that snake out across 3.5 kilometres of the surrounding chalk landscape to link the Avebury structures to other prehistoric earth and stone monuments. The henge earthwork and the stone settings all belong to the third millennium BC, or later Neolithic (Gillings & Pollard, 2004; Harding, 2003). In terms of its scale and structural complexity, Avebury is unusual among henge monuments. It is also unusual in having a living village in and around it, the surviving prehistoric remains now

Figure 5.1 Avebury today



interwoven into a complex web of boundaries, roads, shops and houses (Gillings & Pollard, 2004). This is no 'dead' monument, but a component of a living community. The significance of the site is today reflected in its inscription (along with Stonehenge) as a World Heritage Site, Avebury comprising "a unique surviving example of outstanding human endeavour in Neolithic times and later" (Pomeroy-Kellinger, 2005, p. 20). Reflecting its current heritage status, it has a museum and has been partially restored and renovated.

In archaeological terms, there is a tendency to think of Avebury as 'done'. Detailed plans and descriptions exist dating back to the 17th century, and many limited excavations have taken place, culminating in the major campaigns undertaken in the first half of the 20th century by Harold St. George Gray and Alexander Keiller (Gray, 1935; Smith, 1965). However, the real paucity of detailed archaeological knowledge can be illustrated by Aubrey Burl's estimate (1979, p. 75) that only 6% of the interior has been excavated and most of that focused on the area of the ditch. Even within this notional 6% studied through formal excavation, the results are far from conclusive and often frustratingly unclear. Ambiguity is ever present. Likewise, although a number of plans and records of the monument drawn-up prior to episodes of stone destruction from the 17th through the 19th centuries exist, they are replete with contradictions, errors and speculations and as a result the apparent detail such records offer is invariably illusory (Ucko *et al.*, 1991).

Given the sometimes equivocal nature of archaeological knowledge about the site, and inherent slipperiness and contingency of many of the interpretations tendered, a traditional narrative which seeks to chart a single path through the tensions, contradictions and uncertainties will remain at best a partial account and at worst a misleading one (e.g. Malone, 1989). As a result, when attempting to write about monumental landscapes such as Avebury a traditional historical structure – origin and construction; use and elaboration; desertion and forgetting; archaeological discovery and interpretation (often post scripted with a short section entitled ‘the monument today’) – that treats the structure as essentially a fossil seems somehow lacking; more an obituary than an active history. This is not only because of the seemingly authoritative knowledge claims such histories embody, with the inherent assumption that there is a single story to tease out, but through the implicit assumption that the ‘history’ has, in effect, reached a conclusion. As we hope to show, in the case of Avebury nothing could be further from the truth.

In an attempt to overcome this problem, rather than chart a single authoritative course through the varied and highly nuanced life of Avebury, in our various writings on the site we have sought to take an explicitly *biographical* approach to the life history of the monument; a biography we hope captures better the complexity, dynamism and tension of its long and active social life (e.g. Gillings & Pollard, 1999 & 2004; Pollard & Reynolds, 2002). At the heart of this work has been the assumption that monumental landscapes such as those at Avebury were less ‘structures’ or ‘containers’ laid out according to pre-determined plans in order to serve a finite set of specific purposes, but instead projects whose episodes of construction, elaboration, use and encounter were the very acts from which social and ritual behaviour gained its meaning. In this sense what we see at Avebury today is less a fossil designed and constructed to serve a mysterious past function, but instead the residue of a set of meaningful social practices, spanning the period from its first conception to the present, a residue that is still being actively and vigorously reworked and refashioned today.

Avebury is still very much in a state of becoming, with the episodes of construction, elaboration, destruction, discovery, recording, excavation, even vandalism, continuing to add layer upon layer of meaning. This is where the benefits of an explicitly biographical approach become manifest – there has never been a single ‘correct’ Avebury to tease out, and rather than resolve ambiguities and inconsistencies these need to be actively embraced and brought to the fore – they are, after all, what makes Avebury the monument it is today. For us one of the strengths of approaching

Avebury through the metaphor of biography has been the way that it directs academic attention to the least expected places. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the later history of the site, in the centuries up to the present following its classification as a pre-eminent archaeological site. This is a period when one would expect our understandings to be at their most detailed and refined, yet, as will become evident, this is a period when questions of authenticity and authorship, both active and quiet (see Ronnes, this volume), are brought into stark relief and the social life of the site begins to reach out to other times, places and currents of thought. Here we view Avebury's more recent, historical, biography through the lens of contrasting narratives and practices that sought to project particular visions of its authentic status during prehistory. Foregrounded is not just the physical fabric of the monument complex, but also the agential role of an early antiquarian text and associated series of records where issues of both biography and authenticity come together in surprising and productive ways.

### A Search for the Authentic Avebury

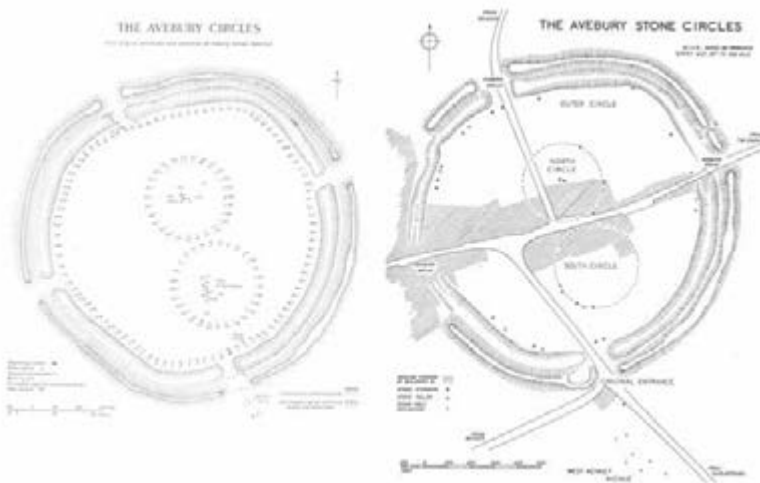
Between the summers of 1719 and 1724 the antiquary and polymath William Stukeley spent periods of a fortnight or more surveying and recording the surviving fabric of the prehistoric earthworks and standing stone settings at Avebury. Both the site and Stukeley's record of it are notable objects of human endeavour and imagination. Despite its scale, the survival of Avebury was not a given facet of its being. William Stukeley's relatively short, punctuated periods of record and survey took place at a time of particular change and physical transformation. Practices of stone-breaking, developed a century or so earlier in order to turn the large slabs of sarsen (a resilient sandstone) that peppered the surrounding downland into manageable building stone, began to be applied to the megaliths of the henge and its avenues (Gillings *et al.*, 2008). This process was well under way when Stukeley first visited the site and continued apace during his period of recording. He noted the positions of remaining megaliths, along with those recently toppled and broken, often relying on local testimony to furnish a record of *what had been* (Piggott, 1985, p. 165-6; Ucko *et al.*, 1991). On-going stone-breaking meant that the process of recording during the period of his visits was never stable, but highly dynamic, subject to revisions and alterations, addenda and corrections. Every summer he would return and resume his recording, but it was of a changed monument. Sometimes

the changes would have been subtle – a stone gone here or there – at other times more dramatic, as entire elements of the Avebury landscape were dismantled and broken up, such as the stone circles of the Sanctuary on Overton Hill connected to the Avebury circles by the 2.5-kilometre-long West Kennet Avenue of paired standing stones (Cunnington, 1931).

Stukeley was never merely recording Avebury; he was also actively trying to make sense of the patterns of earthworks and megaliths that he saw. This was a complex record, of a complex site; and a unique one, insofar as much of the physical fabric he recorded in his published and unpublished work has been lost. Despite his protestations, the process of piecemeal disassembly of the monument complex that was taking place around him continued well into the 19th century, with explosives replacing sledgehammers and bonfires (Gillings *et al.*, 2008). By the time prehistoric archaeology had become a defined academic discipline in the 1850s, the Avebury Stukeley recorded was no longer there (figure 5.2) and as a result his efforts comprise a remarkable record of a unique site, produced at a particularly critical juncture in its life history. And it is a truly remarkable record, both in the levels of technical virtuosity and apparent detail, as well as vision and scope (figure 5.3).

The lack of a comparable surviving Avebury to stand alongside the engravings and descriptions that Stukeley published in *Abury, a temple of the British druids* in 1743 lent his record a considerable (and for many years

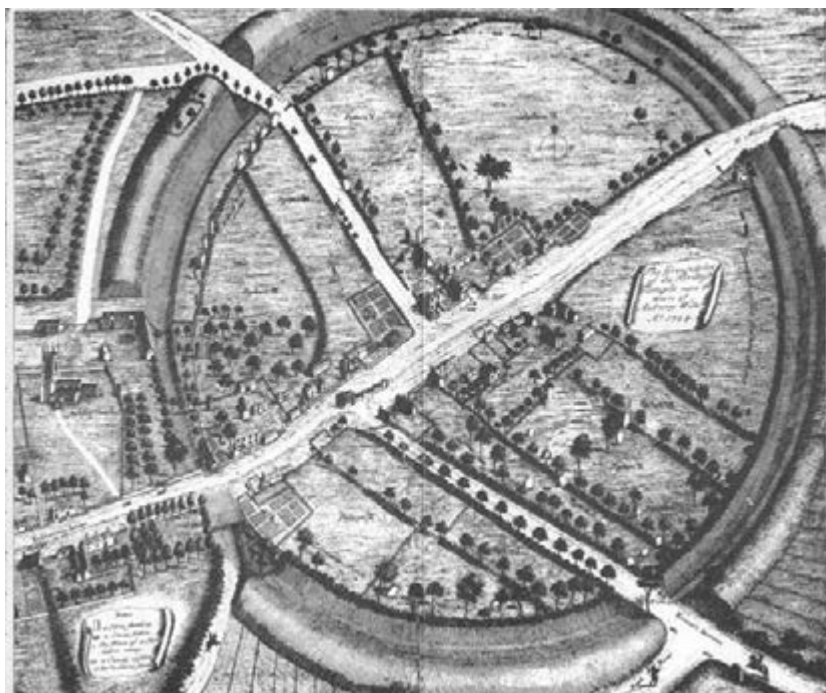
**Figure 5.2** The impact of stone removals on the main circles of the monument



After Smith 1965

Figures 70 (left – Smith's hypothetical reconstruction of a complete, unmolessted Avebury) and 67 (right – all that had survived by the 1930s)

Figure 5.3 Stukeley's frontispiece to *Abury* (1743)



unassailable) aura of authority. The dramatic frontispiece alone stood as a definitive record of the monument, while in the background remained a substantial body of field-notes, sketches and drafts generated by the original fieldwork. In short, Stukeley's *Abury* became a canonical text for students of the site – the definitive record from which interpretations emerged, and against which claims were, and as we will see, still are, evaluated.

Stukeley's quest was to establish the original and authentic form of the Avebury complex, one that had been despoiled by the later encroachment of the village. At one level, this can be seen as an archetypal process of academic enquiry, driven by a sense that it was eminently possible to reconstruct the past *as was*. However, while fascinated by antiquity in itself (Piggott, 1985), Stukeley's interest in the Avebury monuments was driven by a belief that study of this and similar pre-Roman temples provided direct insight into the form of an authentic 'true religion', one shared by all ancient peoples and which provided the foundations of Christianity before it was tainted by idolatry and Rome. Distracted by the archaeological detail, it is easy for modern scholars to forget that *Abury* was a work of contemporary religion and politics (the two domains, of course, being synonymous). In



the preface to *Abury*, Stukeley states his aim to go to “the fountain-head” of proper divine wisdom through the medium of historical study (Stukeley, 1743, p. i), delineating the first, simple, patriarchal religion which he equated with Druidry (Hutton, 2009, p. 89-102). His own individual philosophy comprised a complex and shifting mix of deism, trinitarianism, Newtonian science and Platonist and Pythagorean ideas (Boyd Haycock, 2002; Hutton, 2009), and this permeates every aspect of his interpretation of Avebury. The latter centred upon the idea that Avebury was a planned construction, laid out according to an over-arching hermetic design, the very form and shape of the temple encoding esoteric knowledge. He provided a three-part classification of Druid temples, all variants on a depiction of the deity – a “most effectual prophylact” for drawing down blessings (Stukeley, 1743, p. 9). The scheme comprised simple circles, serpentine temples (or *Dracontia*), and winged (*ophio-cyclo-pterygo-morphus*) temples. Avebury belonged to the second category (Stukeley, 1743; Boyd Haycock, 2002).

What we would like to draw attention to here is not so much Stukeley's *Abury* and his fieldwork archive, but instead the later reception of this work. As a religious text, it received both ridicule and rapturous acceptance, later influencing the radical Protestant poet and artist William Blake and modern Druidry, not to mention the work of such contemporary ‘seekers of truth’ as Michael Dames (Blain & Wallis, 2007; Hutton, 2009; Dames, 1996). In archaeological terms *Abury* has possessed a very active afterlife, its status shifting from that of primary record (to be put to the test), to a form of constructional-blueprint (to be generally followed), to a partial and flawed primary record (to be tested and evaluated with forensic zeal), to end up as an unassailable and definitive record (to be accepted unconditionally). At the centre of this narrative is the status not of Avebury, but instead *Abury* as a material agent around which various authenticity claims have been constructed.

### Stukeley Records a Temple

Through his work, Stukeley created a persistent image of Avebury as a unitary physical structure, and also cemented an erroneous association between this and other megalithic monuments and the pre-Roman priesthood of the Druids that is still with us today. From the mid-18th century until the first archaeological excavations there in the 1860s (Smith, 1867), knowledge and image of the prehistoric monument of Avebury existed almost solely within the confines of Stukeley's archival records and



published work. However, with notable exceptions such as Colt Hoare's account in his influential *Ancient History of North Wiltshire* (1821), the integrity of Stukeley's Avebury was placed under increasing scrutiny, both in terms of his interpretative schema and the veracity of his supposedly empirical recording. Throughout the later 18th and 19th centuries lively debate regarding Stukeley's *Dracontia* and Druidical connections raged; to some it was nonsense, to others he simply had not gone far enough (see Gillings & Pollard, 2004, chapter 9). We can also detect the beginnings of a trend that was to find its clearest voice in the 20th century (e.g. Piggott, 1950), that by the time of publication in 1743 the survey records of the site had been massaged by Stukeley in order to better support the sinuous logic of his serpentine scheme (e.g. Long, 1858, p. 26). There was the suspicion that between the end of the period of his fieldwork in 1724 and the publication of *Abury* in 1743, Stukeley had gradually manipulated the record to better fit his *Dracontia* interpretation (Piggott, 1985, p. 107). Gaps in the survey record were creatively filled in, and, in the case of the Sanctuary, the shape of the stone circles deliberately flattened so as to better resemble a serpent's head. However, it is clear that even before the serpent temple took hold, and while fieldwork was on-going, the dialectic between observation and interpretative reconstruction was in operation (Ucko *et al.*, 1991). Before the reptilian image of deity, came symmetry; and Stukeley as a good Newtonian natural philosopher appreciated that symmetry, order and harmony were at the heart of the 'system of the world', and that its divine laws had been keenly understood by the ancients who created Avebury (Boyd Haycock, 2002, p. 93-9). Thus it was that despite an absence of evidence, the western (Beckhampton) megalithic avenue was confidently extended from the Longstones to Fox Covert in order to create symmetry with the West Kennet Avenue, a stone cove (box-like arrangement of stones) was placed mid-way along both, and the henge earthwork made geometrically circular, presumably to correct its flawed implementation and more realistically represent the original intentions of its builders. What is of particular interest is that when questions were subsequently raised regarding Stukeley's work they tended to focus upon his interpretative scheme and representational sleights-of-hand it engendered, rather than the fundamental truths of the underlying survey record. Within the 19th-century work of William Long (1858), A.C. Smith (1885) and others, there existed a central idea that if one could only blow away the fog of patriarchal Druidry and the *Dracontia*, you would find as accurate and objective a record of the now lost site as could be made in the early 18th century.

## Keiller Builds One

The idea that Stukeley's *Abury* could function as an authentic blueprint for Avebury is illustrated by the greatest single campaign of excavation carried out at the site. This was undertaken between 1934 and 1939 under the direction of Alexander Keiller, the aim of this exercise being a combination of enhancing archaeological understanding of the monument complex and active reconstruction (Smith, 1965). Prehistoric Avebury was to be rapidly resurrected, although the process was halted half-way by the outbreak of the Second World War. Paralleling in many ways the campaigns of the Victorian church restorers, the process entailed not only the raising up of fallen or previously buried standing stones, but the 'freeing' of the monument from the living village that lay within and around it, something only dreamt of by Stukeley and John Aubrey before him (Smith, 1965; Lowenthal, 2011, p. 215-6). Writing three years after the last season of work, Grahame Clark talked of the site's 'rehabilitation' (1940, p. 107), while one published plate in his *Prehistoric England* shows 'the south-western sector after *treatment*' [our emphasis] with stones re-erected and later features removed (Clark, 1940, plate 100).

Stukeley's *Abury* directly guided the hand of Keiller in bringing Avebury back to life. Keiller had acquired many of Stukeley's drawings and surveys of Avebury at a sale of the family papers in 1924 (Piggott, 1965, p. xx), and these much influenced his desire to purchase and restore the monument. While his assessment of Stukeley's work was far from uncritical, strong echoes of Stukeley permeate Keiller's own excavation strategy and site records (Ucko *et al.*, 1991, p. 244-7).

The work carried out by Keiller has been likened to a form of megalithic jigsaw puzzle, with Stukeley's records providing the picture on the box (Gillings & Pollard, 2004, p. 180). Even his employee and colleague Stuart Piggott referred dryly to the work as an act of 'megalithic landscape gardening' (Piggott, 1983, p. 32) (figure 5.4). As with the vigorous campaigns of 19th-century church restoration, and the 'Anti-Scrape' movement of William Morris and colleagues that emerged in response to it, not everyone was happy with the results of the work (Lowenthal, 2011, p. 215). The artist Paul Nash had first visited Avebury in the summer of 1933, just before Keiller's work began on the West Kennet Avenue, and photographed the stones of the avenue and the henge. He was much inspired by their form, composition and 'suggestion of a super-reality' (Bertram, 1955, p. 243), inspiration that led to the production of a series of remarkable surrealist paintings: *Landscape of the Megaliths* (1934 and 1937), *Equivalent for the Megaliths*

Figure 5.4 Keiller's engineering project



Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury)

(1935) and *Circle of the Monoliths* (1938). As Sam Smiles notes, his was an artistic accommodation with the past that was set apart from contemporary archaeological understandings, being situated instead within a particularly

British neo-romantic and surrealist artistic movement to which painters and sculptors such as John Piper, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth belonged (Smiles, 2005, p. 147). Although relations between Nash and Keiller were cordial, Nash felt that the excavations and restoration had destroyed something of Avebury's quality, removing the 'primal magic' of the stones' appearance (Hawkes, 2002, p. 311) and turning them into a dead museum exhibit (Smiles, 2005, p. 148). It is interesting to note here Nash's interest in the romanticism and mysticism of William Blake, another indirect legacy from Stukeley (Boyd Haycock, 2010). Stukeley's *Abury* seeps through on both sides, but while Keiller felt he was recreating through the excavations a close approximation of the authentic Avebury, Nash considered the process to be one that robbed the place of its aura and *genius loci*.

Even if closely guided by it, Keiller was not slavish in his adherence to Stukeley's record; he was too good an archaeologist to fall into such a trap. If Keiller had merely followed the records of Stukeley then the resultant Avebury would constitute a curious and perhaps unique example of a 1930s reconstruction of what might best be termed a Newtonian-inspired Georgian late Neolithic monument complex. However, like Stukeley before him, Keiller's fieldwork was intimately bound up with interpretation and his reconstructed Avebury also carries with it evidence of the interpretative concerns of the time. Some of these centred upon sexual symbolism and the idea that the shapes of the standing stones embodied archetypal male (thin and tall) and female (triangular) properties: referred to as types A and B respectively (Keiller & Piggott, 1936). When stabilizing existing stones and re-erecting fallen or previously buried ones, the way in which they were set upright was strongly constrained by the assumption that all of the stones originally erected at the site conformed to one or other of these basic types.

Keiller's sexual template was also extended to stones that had already been re-erected. For example, he pointedly set out to rectify the setting of a fallen West Kennet Avenue stone that had been re-erected by the archaeologist Maud Cunnington in 1912, arguing that it was not only in the wrong position, but upside down (Keiller & Piggott, 1936, p. 418).

## Purity of Vision

As well as the fabric of the monument, Keiller also set about removing the clutter of the modern village from the interior of the henge in an attempt to return it to some notional pristine state. Reconstruction went hand-in-hand with deconstruction, and Keiller's vision went far beyond the removal of

unsightly tree-stumps, rubbish-dumps and field-walls. In 1937 he gained permission from its owner to demolish a cow-byre in the northwestern quadrant of the site 'in the interest of the monument'. A year later, two derelict cottages, their outbuildings and a modern stable in the southwestern sector were dismantled (Keiller, 1939, p. 225 and p. 230). Rawlins' Garage, lying close to the centre of the monument was also demolished, and at Keiller's expense new premises were constructed immediately outside the northern entrance (Rawlins, 1999, p. 44). Put simply, the village and the monument were forcibly disentangled. What is more, this active process of heritage-cleansing carried on long after Keiller's last excavation season in 1939, as a selective programme of demolition was continued by the National Trust (a non-government heritage body) well into the 1950s (Pitts, 1996; Edwards, 2000) (figure 5.5).

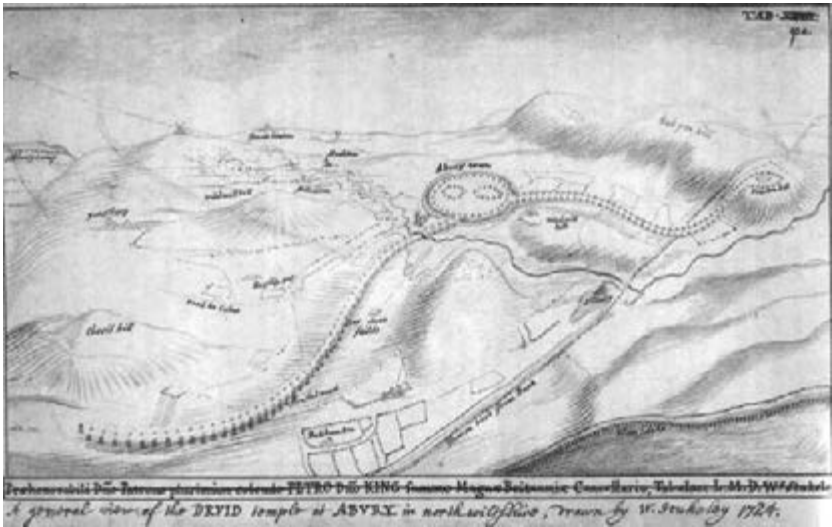
Since Keiller's work at Avebury, sustained research has revealed the fallacy of the assumption that empirical record preceded fanciful manipulation in Stukeley's research (Ucko *et al.*, 1991). Interpretation shaped Stukeley's field records from the outset. Further, whilst Stukeley is often portrayed as one of the father figures of objective, scientific archaeological field-craft, and many of his field notes and sketches betray a concern for empirical measurement and exactitude, many do not, with depictions of Avebury

**Figure 5.5** The 20th-century social cleansing of Avebury



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Figure 5.6 Stukeley's *Dracontia* in all its sinuous symmetry



Stukeley draft drawing published as Plate 26 in Ucko *et al.*, 1991)

firmly embedded in a stylistic trope of landscape depiction more commonly associated with the contemporary visualization of stately homes and their landscaped gardens. Indeed Boyd Haycock has recently argued that the approach adopted by Stukeley in *Abury* ‘reflect[s] the express influence of contemporary, “polite” fashions in early 18th century landscape design’ (Boyd Haycock, 2009, p. 46). Even Stukeley’s terminology floats between realms religious (temples, sanctuaries) and those picturesque (formal avenues). To put it bluntly, Stukeley’s *Abury* is of its time; a profoundly early 18th-century monument that is as much concerned with Palladian (and/or Newtonian) symmetry and the theatre of the landscaped garden and formal tour as it is the exigencies of druidical practice (figure 5.6).

Wherever one looks, a complex web of citation runs through the Aveburys of Stukeley and Keiller, and one that takes the monument *away from* rather than *towards* its proper late Neolithic context. The Egyptian art-deco style of the new Rawlins’ Garage, while a manifestation of designerly influence that can be traced to the fascination with all things Egyptian following the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb by Howard Carter in November 1922 (Elliott, 2008), unintentionally draws attention to Stukeley’s fascination with ancient Egypt. Stukeley was convinced that the Druids had been brought to Britain by the Tyrian Hercules, a ‘pastor king’ of the Egyptians, introducing the original patriarchal religion that was materialized in the



Figure 5.7 A clash of aesthetics – the north-west sector of Avebury



Figure 5.8 Keiller's carefully re-erected obelisks and stones



Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of the Alexander Keiller Museum, Avebury)

creation of Avebury (Stukeley, 1743, p. 70-8). He even named the largest stone within the Southern Inner Circle at Avebury the 'Obilisk', in imitation of the tapering stones erected in front of ancient Egyptian temples, and evidently saw a direct genealogical connection between both. The appellation still holds, though the stone itself is now gone. In its place, and marking the positions of other stones that were broken up during the late 17th and 18th centuries, Keiller placed a series of concrete markers that he had carefully manufactured so as to be modern and clearly distinct from the original stones. Ironically, the form he chose was that of miniature obelisks (figure 5.7). The overall effect is a startling motley of citation, evocation and reference that is particularly striking in the north-west sector of the circles: here the deliberately smoothed and manicured bank (Deco) frames artfully re-erected sarsen stones; obelisks (Egyptian deco); and reassembled but still fragmentary stones that look as though they had been sculpted by Paul Nash or Henry Moore (figure 5.8).

### What *is* Avebury?

Whilst the assumption that a phase of meticulous empirical fieldwork on the part of Stukeley preceded a more creative reworking of such records held currency, the idea that the records could function as a blueprint for the original Avebury could be sustained. However, growing realization that this core assumption was flawed, makes Keiller's Avebury a true oddity. Most archaeological excavations result in the production of a substantial archive at the expense of a physical structure, rather than the other way around. Just what did Keiller put together and to what extent was it a process of construction rather than reconstruction? Whatever the opinion on the authenticity of his work, it left behind a very physical 'Avebury' that went on to have a direct and powerful impact upon the public and academic imaginations. Visitors to the excavations rose from an impressive 100-200 per week at the beginning to some 1000-1500 towards the end (Keiller, 1939, p. 229 and p. 233). When a museum was opened at Avebury in 1938 to display the finds from the excavations here and at the near-by site of Windmill Hill, it not only received 6000 visitors in its first five months but a positive write-up in *The Times* (Murray, 1999, p. 90). Keiller's Avebury also attained a prominence in the archaeological literature that persists today. For example, in contrast to the short paragraph given over to the site in Kendrick and Hawkes' influential survey of British archaeology published in 1932, there is an extended discussion in Grahame Clark's *Prehistoric England* of 1940.



The latter even opened with an aerial photograph of the henge actively under excavation and restoration (Kendrick & Hawkes, 1932; Clark, 1940).

Keiller's Avebury or, more accurately, *Keiller's-version-of-Stukeley's-Georgian-Avebury*, is visited and explored today by over half a million people a year, and in 1986 was granted the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a designation that is itself underpinned by notions of authenticity (Larsen, 1995; Holtorf & Schadla-Hall, 1999, p. 234). This is an Avebury that has in turn generated its own records, interpretations, debates, discussions, protests and demands, yet as we have illustrated, it is one whose precise relationship to the Neolithic is not always certain. We therefore have phenomenological ruminations and archaeo-astronomical measurements of *Keiller's-version-of-Stukeley's-Georgian-Avebury* that purport to shed important light upon processes of prehistoric monumentality (e.g. Watson, 2001 & 2004; Sims, 2009a & 2009b). We also have researchers claiming to see forms (human and animal) in the stones carefully put into their current configurations not by Neolithic communities, but by Keiller, the wealthy heir to a marmalade fortune who possessed a passion for witchcraft, fast cars and archaeology, among other things (Meaden, 1999; Murray, 1999). As for the Stukeley records, the late 20th century witnessed a short-lived concern with the question of reliability, epitomized by the work of Ucko *et al.* (1991), which painstakingly compared published engravings with the original field notes and unpublished drafts in an attempt to distil the objective from the creative in Stukeley's work – essentially extracting the Avebury from *Abury*. This was an impressive piece of scholarship, characterized by ferociously detailed analyses of the surviving Stukeley archive and the ways in which the raw materials collected in the 1720s were assembled and presented some 20 years later. The aim in this work was to refute, question, challenge and otherwise interrogate the archive, rather than actively use it. Keiller's blueprint had once again become a record.

### **Worshipping at the Temple**

Although a developing body of work, and especially that of Ucko *et al.*, highlighted the caution with which Stukeley's *Abury* should be approached, there still exist remarkable instances of academic and pseudo-academic writing that treat this 18th-century vision of Avebury as authentic (Dames, 1996; Sims, 2009a & 2009b). Such works represent one of the more extraordinary developments in the story: researchers who deliberately and actively elect to work with Stukeley's published syntheses rather than the

archaeological detail of the late Neolithic monumental complex that is emerging from recent campaigns of excavation (e.g. Pitts, 2001; Whittle, 1997; Gillings *et al.*, 2008; Leary & Field, 2010). The latter fieldwork is revealing a monument complex whose creation spans as much as a millennium, its final shape and form less the result of any single overarching design, than the sedimented product of creative reworking and addition over many generations. Thus, we now know that the earthwork at Avebury is of at least two phases of construction, that the stone settings within the henge are not all contemporary, and that the avenues come very late in the Neolithic sequence; a materialization perhaps of the evolution of religious, cosmological and ideological structures that took place during the third millennium BC (Pollard & Cleal, 2004; Gillings *et al.*, 2008, p. 202-4).

In recent discussions, anthropologists have sought to demonstrate that the configuration of the Avebury complex was 'consistent with the predictions of a recent anthropological model of lunar-solar conflation' (Sims, 2009a, p. 386). Curiously, the real theoretical agenda of the work was hidden behind a critique of postmodern approaches to the interpretation of processes such as monumentality and a call for a marriage of conceptual/analytic scales through the merging of phenomenological and archaeo-astronomical approaches that would achieve a nirvana of 'methodological transcendence' that 'can reconstitute a [past] reality' (Sims, 2009a, p. 389). In Stukeley fashion, here was a search for religious truth (or, at least, an over-arching model of the development of human ritual structure) through the realization and exploration of an 'authentic' Avebury. To achieve this, the authenticity of other studies of the monument complex had to be questioned. Without even a hint of irony, the authenticity that is interrogated is not of *Stukeley's-Georgian-Avebury* or *Keiller's-version-of-Stukeley's-Georgian-Avebury*, but the prehistoric archaeological evidence that has been revealed through recent excavations.

The resultant interpretation is grounded upon the rock of Stukeley's published account which has once again adopted the mantle of unquestionable-authority originally bestowed upon it in the early 19th century by researchers such as Colt Hoare; Stukeley's *Abury* taking on the mantle of canonical text (Colt Hoare, 1821). The results of excavations on the Beckhampton Avenue undertaken from 1999 to 2003 (Gillings *et al.*, 2008) are thus interrogated and found wanting (Sims, 2009b), because the archaeology did not provide the structural symmetry required in the model, which in turn had to conform to Stukeley's image of the monument complex in order to work. In a move that is telling of the faith that is held in Stukeley's *Abury* above that of latter researchers, the study illustrates the Avebury complex through the use of

two images: the first a 19th-century re-drafting of Stukeley's panorama of the reconstructed complex; the second Colt Hoare's plan which itself derived directly from Stukeley (Sims, 2009a, figure 1; see also figure 5.6 here).

In this dismissal of a substantial body of later research, much of which was aimed at ground-truthing the detail of the prehistoric monument through painstaking excavation, research such as this is merely continuing a tradition begun in the 1970s with the work of Michael Dames, which viewed archaeology with suspicion, equating purity of vision with primacy of observation and interpretation. Dames' debt to Stukeley was never in doubt and he relies upon his published work throughout his account. Indeed, in stating that 'there has been one previous attempt to consider the overall meaning of the Avebury monuments... by the antiquarian, Dr William Stukeley' (Dames, 1996, p. 12), it could be argued that Dames was setting himself up as the good Doctor's heir and successor. His interpretation that the complex was dedicated to the worship of the 'Great Goddess' blended elements of Stukeley, generalized folklore and the work of Marija Gimbutas (Gimbutas, 1974), with a twist of the mystical romanticism of Blake, into a heady and immensely popular cocktail. The result is a highly sexualized landscape capable of accommodating not only the serpents of Stukeley but even the gendering of standing stones introduced by Keiller. Since the aims of works such as those of Sims and Dames is to *explain* Avebury's singular purpose – its mystery – it is perhaps no surprise that Stukeley's records better fit the idea of a single coherent and profoundly esoteric plan, given they were a reflection of precisely such a scheme.

## Ancestral Values

If one significant recent trend has been the selective academic reinstatement of Stukeley's *Abury* as the authentic Avebury, a second has manifested itself in a stubborn adherence to the Stukeleian orthodoxy that the site was a temple, and a Druidic one at that. Although the equation between Avebury and Druidry was first drawn in the 17th century by the academic discoverer of the site John Aubrey (Piggott, 1989, p. 114-5), Stukeley's treatment was by far the most ornate and highly developed and it is perhaps not surprising that *Keiller's-version-of-Stukeley's-Georgian-Avebury* has proven a potent magnet for adherents of modern Druidry. As a loose amalgam of adherents to neo-pagan belief systems, modern Druidry is itself 'a construct of 20th-century engagements with (18th and 19th century) antiquarian imagination on "druids"' (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 11), much drawn from Stukeley's work.

As Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis highlight, these modern-day pagans are true *bricoleurs*, borrowing from disparate indigenous religious traditions, and from the evidence-sets and interpretations provided by archaeology (2007, p. 26). For many authenticity as derived from a connection to the prehistoric past is not so much an issue (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 11), but for a vocal faction claims of indigenous rites, ancestral legacy and direct lineage provide an opportunity to raise political voice. This has become most evident in a recent request by the Council of British Druid Orders (CoBDO) to have Neolithic and early Bronze Age human remains from selected sites in the Avebury landscape re-interred on the grounds that they represent the remains of their ancestors (CoBDO, 2008, p. 1). The need for reburial was couched in the language of acts of respect, love and human decency, but the sub-text was one of ancestral identification and a perceived continuity – an attempt to appropriate the success of indigenous post-colonial politics in North America and Australia, particularly that of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which was cited in the CoBDO request. Following extensive consultation, a final ruling by the National Trust (the holders of the human remains under contestation) and English Heritage went against the CoBDO request.

It is unlikely that this will be the last case in which prehistoric human remains and ancient monuments in the UK will be appropriated as part of legitimacy claims, and questions of authenticity (whether defined by experts or other interest groups) will always play their part. What remains striking in the case of Avebury is the continued resonance of Stukeley's *Abury* in such matters. Whilst it would be simplistic and misleading to claim that modern Druidry, like the physical Avebury that serves as a focus for contemporary Druidic practices, sprang entirely from the writings of Stukeley, it can certainly be argued that 'the achievement of William Stukeley had been... to turn the Druids into ancestors whom all the British could hold in common' (Hutton, 2009, p. 182). In the recent call for the reburial of selected prehistoric human remains by one sector of modern Paganism, this fundamental irony went unnoticed.

### **Authenticity, Artifice and Avebury**

It could be argued that with regard to the discipline of archaeology, authenticity was more of an explicit issue in its formative stage when the status of discoveries – sites and artefacts such as Glozel and the Piltdown remains – was key. Today the question of verification is normally provided

by scientific dating and characterization techniques, a critical approach to the interpretation of excavated data, and a much enhanced awareness of the natural and cultural processes that transform archaeological sites and deposits. Where the issue of authenticity and discussions of its relevance and meaning have been more visible is within the heritage sector (Larsen, 1995; Jones, 2010). This is where the presentation of 'correct' information and accurate reconstructions is deemed to matter, though the question is sometimes one of who this authenticity is designed to serve – the public or the professional? As Cornelius Holtorf and Tim Schadla-Hall have observed (1999), the public does not always put the same value on 'genuineness' as archaeologists.

Within the heritage world there is a growing acknowledgement that authenticity is not necessarily an inherent quality. As Sian Jones has argued 'The authenticity of objects is experienced and negotiated as a numinous or magical relationship that, I argue, is linked to the networks of inalienable relationships they have been involved in throughout their social lives' (2010, p. 199) and to regard it as in any way essential to the character of the site or landscape is at best limiting. In many ways Avebury exemplifies this point. The physical presence of Keiller's Avebury masks the considerable levels of interpretation, uncertainty and compromise that underlay its (re) construction. It also masks the extent to which the site reflects, in chalk, turf, stone and concrete, an idealized Georgian take on the idea of a temple. In Walter Benjamin's terms (1992), Avebury has performed the unusual trick of being a mechanical reproduction (quite literally) that has generated an aura more powerful than the original. There is also an intoxicating hyper-reality about the Avebury that you can today visit and wander around, made all the more visceral by the authority that its sheer physicality and apparent timelessness can muster.

So where does this all leave us, and Avebury? We *can*, if we choose, treat the Stukeley archive as a unique record of a prehistoric structure and interrogate it on those terms, ignoring the archaeological evidence of what preceded it. Alternately, rather than take a forensic approach to the various Aveburys that compete for our attention in order to validate/invalidate the academic truth claim *du jour*, we can focus instead on its strange alternating nature (flipping from record to blueprint and back again) and start to think creatively through the ironies and tensions that emerge from this – not least of which being modern Avebury itself. The deliberately inauthentic can serve to clear as productive a heuristic space as the slavishly authentic, and archaeology should not shy away from the interpretative possibilities such simulacra open up (Pollard & Gillings, 1998; Gillings, 2002; Goodrick

& Gillings, 2000; see also Lowenthal, 1992). A further, potentially productive interpretative pathway draws its inspiration from Hutton's erudite study of the ritual year in Britain and the folk practices it encompasses. This is the important realization that it is not so much the possibility that essentially prehistoric pagan practices survived in an encoded form within early historic (and contemporary) folk traditions, but why people are so desperate to believe that they might have (Hutton, 1996).

### Postscript: Time for a New Avebury to Emerge?

Rather than a historically specific image (*Abury*) of a prehistoric reality (*Avebury*) we hope to have shown how the former has generated a biography in many ways as rich and complex as the latter. Reaching out to embrace other times, places, histories and flows – from New Kingdom Egypt and radical currents in 18th-century religious thought to the design of gentrified gardens – *Abury's* biography has not stood apart from that of *Avebury* but has instead been deeply and thoroughly interwoven with it, to the point where it is difficult (indeed unwise) to tease them apart. And on that story goes.

Figure 5.9 The Avebury Cove (the 4.9-metre-high Stone I is in the foreground)



Avebury seems incapable of standing still, and the last decade has witnessed at least one concerted attempt to re-erect a fallen megalith *à la* Keiller (Mike Pitts, personal communication), a programme of work to stabilize two others, and questions being raised as to the verisimilitude of elements of Keiller's reconstruction. Perhaps the most interesting of the latter is the claim that the Cunnington stone he pointedly re-erected on the grounds that it had been placed upside down was in fact correctly placed all along (De Bruxelles, 2003). We will end with a recent example that shows that Avebury is not ready to be preserved in faux-prehistoric aspic just yet. In the centre of the northern inner circle of Avebury is a setting of enormous megaliths called the Cove (figure 5.9). Originally taking the form of a three- or four-sided box, two of the stones survive today. In 1997 the decision was taken by National Trust engineers on health and safety grounds to fence off the area of the Cove, as it was believed that the stones were progressively leaning inwards (towards the notional centre of the structure) and might topple, crushing any unsuspecting visitor that happened to be in the way. In 2003 engineering works, preceded by archaeological excavation, were finally carried out to correct the lean by excavating away the soil at the back of each stone, straightening them to their original vertical standing and then packing the bases with concrete (figure 5.10). In the case of the southern stone (I), it became clear that the stone was indeed leaning, and that this had been caused by the structural purging of the village started by Keiller and maintained by the National Trust. When the outbuildings of a row of cottages were constructed against the stones in the late 18th century, the builders had dug away the rear of the original stone socket and thus the support it had provided. Fortunately, the weight and bulk of the cottage walls acted as a satisfactory replacement, and it was only with the demolition of the structures in the 1950s and removal of the support that instability was introduced (Gillings *et al.*, 2008, p. 153-69).

The western stone (II) was also regarded as possessing a dangerous lean, which required rectifying. However, excavation categorically demonstrated that this 4.4-metre-high megalith (weighing in the order of 100 tonnes), was in exactly the same position as when set up; the idea that it had developed a progressive lean being completely unfounded. The observation that at least one of the stones originally bent subtly towards the centre of the notional box is important as it may shed crucial light upon the original role(s) played by the stones of the structure – the looming inwards creating a very deliberate visual effect perhaps designed to choreograph or engender a sense of enclosure and awe on the part of any viewer located in its midst. What is of interest in the context of the present account is that, despite



**Figure 5.10 Engineering verticality (Stone I)**

this, there still existed an imperative to set Stone II vertical, the will of managers and engineers only being thwarted by its sheer size and weight. The question of why the Cove stones were *expected* to have originally been vertical utterly escaped critical discussion, though there is a temptation to draw an analogy with the aesthetic assumptions that underpinned the work of Keiller. What is clear is that we perhaps need to add the imperatives of late 20th-century health and safety legislation and fear of litigation to the rich list of ingredients that make Avebury the remarkable site it is today.

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## 6 Places That Matter

### Megalithic Monuments from a Biographical Perspective

*Ludvig Pappmehl-Dufay*

#### **Abstract**

This chapter deals with the importance and meaning of places as seen from an archaeological perspective. The concepts of place and place attachment are briefly reviewed and put into archaeological context, followed by a biographical discussion of four megalithic monuments situated on the island of Öland, southeast Sweden. The location as well as the long-term use of the tombs is discussed, and the distinction between primary and secondary use of megaliths is dismissed. It is argued that memory has been a vital factor in the ascription of meaning to these places, and that remembrance in the wide sense constitutes the key to our understanding of monumental location and clusters. Finally, the discussion is brought together in some brief notes on why archaeology matters.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, place attachment, memory, Neolithic, megalithic tombs, Öland

#### **Introduction**

My wife and I recently bought a house. It is not a new one, it is nearly 120 years old and has been inhabited by farmers all of this time. It was built in 1892 on the remains of two older houses that were destroyed in a fire that same year. From people in the neighbourhood we have learned some details about people who resided in the house before we bought it, and through findings within the four walls we have come in close 'contact' with specific events in the history of the house, such as the covering of old doors with Masonite on 18 August 1942 (figure 6.1). Slowly and gradually, in the course of renovation, the biography of the house reveals itself and we try to comprehend the history of the building and what it has meant for people passing by during the last 120 years. Time and again it strikes us just how rich this history is, how many joyful and sad events have taken place here and how many life-paths have crossed the site of this particular house

Figure 6.1 The biography of our house revealing itself



Piece of newspaper with handwritten message, found during removal of Masonite covering on the late-19th-century doors. My translation: "Placed here on August 18th by Frank Nelson, Färjestaden. This house is now 50 years old".

since it was built. The old lady who killed herself in the hen house, the child that was born in the kitchen... Still we are only viewing fragments of the last 120 years of several centuries of occupation at the site, already feeling a bit dizzy at the thought of all events and people involved. To us, the age of the house and the farm itself gives it an authenticity and a 'soul' that is not possible to achieve with a newly built house. That is, the meaning of this place for us is made up of its history, as we know it. The more we learn, the richer this meaning becomes.

This rather personal introduction serves to introduce the theme of this chapter, which broadly is on people and places and the way activities and memory combine to make up the meaning of a place. Some general thoughts on place are presented and put into context in a biographical approach to archaeological places. The setting is southeast Sweden in the Neolithic (c. 4000-1800 BC), and the specific archaeological sites that are used to concretize the discussion are four megalithic tombs situated on the island of Öland in the Baltic Sea (Papmehl-Dufay, 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2012). The discussion on biographies and meaning of place is brought together in some brief notes on why archaeology matters.

## The Importance of Places

In geography and the social sciences, place is most often understood as a socialized space perceived through human experience. The cognitive and emotional perception by humans of physical space is central to the concept. In contrast to space, place is a social construction (Rodman, 1992; Adams *et al.*, 2001), and the meaning of a place is rendered through complex processes of human behaviour and psychology. Canadian geographer Edward Relph, in his classic *Place and Placelessness*, identified three components that together form the identity of places: physical appearance, activities/functions, and meanings/symbols (Relph, 1976, p. 61). These three, he argued, could combine in innumerable ways and thus the diversity of place is infinite. In a similar vein, the Brazilian architect Lineu Castello identified three types of interactions involved in the social constitution of place (Castello, 2010, p. 10f): The first category refers to the spatial dimension and relates to the objective morphology of places, their 'aura'. The second involves the temporal dimension, referring to histories evoking people's collective memory. The third type of interaction is between people, and is referred to by Castello as 'places of plurality'. All three categories are stimulated by elements of collective imagination (spatial, temporal and social), and essentially the collective experience of this plurality is what turns space into a place (Castello, 2010, p. 11). With Relph as well as Castello, we are presented with a three-part division of the meaning of place involving physical (objective) appearance, (human and non-human) activities and memory. Translated to an archaeological context, it is apparent that not all of these factors are always readily detectable. However, this does not mean we cannot reach a fruitful discussion concerning the meaning of archaeological places (e.g. Bowser & Zedeño, 2009 and papers therein). The objective is not necessarily to establish an understanding of the specific meaning/s of particular places, but an appreciation of their individual importance serves to underline the processes involved in the social construction of place. Hence, the mechanisms involved in the constitution of meaning of place as reviewed above are of great interest to archaeology.

In fields such as environmental psychology and sociology, the concept of 'place attachment' is used to describe the emotional and cognitive associations between people and physical locations (Tuan, 1977). Sociologist Melinda Milligan suggested place attachment to be comprised of two components, one directed towards the past and one towards the future: 'interactional past' refers to past experiences and memories associated with a location, while 'interactional potential' defines expected or hoped

future experiences connected to the place (Milligan, 1998, p. 2). To be attached to places is a central human need (Relph, 1976, p. 38), and thus the meanings of place and place attachment are culturally universal phenomena (Rodman, 1992). This in turn means that the consequences of place attachment, i.e. the tendency of people to stay close to specific places (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001, p. 247), are something that should be of relevance to investigate concerning past societies as well. So far the concept seems to have been used mainly in modern contexts and at a neighbourhood level, however (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001), and the exploration of this phenomenon in archaeological contexts is to my knowledge non-existent so far. A potential problem might of course be of methodological concern; studies of place attachment are generally qualitative in nature, with informants and interviews as the main source of data (e.g. Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Casakin & Kreitler, 2008). Despite these difficulties, a theoretical framework involving the concept of place attachment could be of great use in discussing issues such as mobile settlement patterns, migration, places of continuity, etc. A concept closely related to place attachment, but one that will not be dealt with further in this context, is material possession attachment, which concerns the relationship between individuals and material objects and which has been widely applied within, for instance, marketing science (Kleine & Baker, 2004). Considering the role of material objects to our discipline, the potential of using this concept in archaeology should perhaps also be evaluated.

## **Landscape Biographies in Archaeology**

During the last couple of decades, the life histories of objects and places have been the focus of an increasing number of archaeological studies (e.g. Gillings & Pollard, 1999; Holtorf 2000-2008, 2002; c.f. Appadurai, 1986 and papers therein). Focusing on the social lives of material things, the concept of artefact biographies in archaeology aims at detecting and understanding changes in meaning that emerge from social action around and with the object (Gosden & Marshall, 1999, p. 169). The life history of an object is seen as a key to its social function, which may vary considerably over time and which is vital for an understanding of its practical dimensions. Material objects in this perspective should be regarded as actors, capable of taking active part in communication with other material and human actors (LaMotta & Schiffer, 2001). Larger material objects, such as the individual sarsens in the enormous henge monument at Avebury in southern England, can be



approached in the same way; the monument and all of its parts tell stories that, at least in some cases, can be detected and followed archaeologically right from the late Neolithic through prehistoric, medieval and up to present times (Gillings & Pollard, 1999; see also Pollard & Gillings, this volume). Such a biographical approach highlights a critical aspect of the importance of places, namely their different interpretation and association in different periods and contexts and hence the perception and use of archaeological sites in periods post-dating their original cultural context. A large body of literature exists where this matter is scrutinized (e.g. Burström, 1996; Holtorf, 1998a & 1998b; Karlsson, 2000; Hutton, 2009). At Avebury, although the status as a World Heritage Site is only a couple of decades old, the place has been ascribed special importance for at least 4000 years (Harvey, 2008 p. 23ff).

A biographical approach to landscapes recognizes the temporal dimensions of dwelling in an attempt to understand the dynamic relations between the inhabitants and their world (Ingold, 1993 & 2000). Landscape here constitutes the inhabited world, as the inhabitants know it, and the concept of *taskscape* as defined by anthropologist Tim Ingold represents the activities taking place there (Ingold, 1993, p. 156 and 158). In this view, *landscape* can be seen and *taskscape* is what you can hear; it is the temporal and historical dimension of landscape (Ingold, 1993, p. 157ff). In a biographical perspective of *taskscape*, remembrance constitutes the crucial factor that preserves activities and builds up a body of 'pastscape' of a place, i.e. the remembered and acknowledged stories of past events and activities connected to a place that serves to render that particular place its cultural meaning. In this way narratives are created, stories that connect actors and sceneries in time and space. Cultural geographer David Harvey emphasizes the nature of heritage as a process, historically embedded but always produced in the present (Harvey, 2001). The use of archaeological sites in periods post-dating their original cultural context should be viewed from this perspective; at all times, these places have been experienced and interpreted from the perspective of the present, no matter what present (Harvey, 2001 p. 325).

The remembrance of past generations' associations with the landscape provide a sense of place attachment, be it the acknowledged memory of real events or myths that connected places with events and activities in the past (Edmonds, 1999, p. 26 and 29f). The greater the time-depth in occupation and activities at a site are, the stronger the place-values that are associated with it (Chapman, 1997, p. 37). Although not explicitly stated in the literature on meaning of place and place attachment reviewed above,



it seems clear that for the temporal dimension of the meaning of place and its component of meaning/symbols, memory is absolutely crucial in the sense that it ensures the perceived meaning of the place to be transmitted and experienced through time. Without memory, the meaning of place would be restricted to its physical objective appearance and the activities performed in the immediate and experienced presence of perception (see Relph, 1976, p. 61). With the memory of past activities and stories connected to the location, together with prospective memories of its anticipated future (Holtorf, 1996 & 1997), the meaning of place becomes multifaceted and dynamic in a way not possible in the isolated and memory-less present. This corresponds directly to the 'interactional past' and 'interactional potential' of place attachment as reviewed above (Milligan, 1998). Memory in this way is the clue to the understanding of the meaning of, and attachment to, places. Furthermore, the spatial aspect of memory has been shown to be of critical importance: 'Having been in places is a fundamental resource for remembering our being in the world' (Lillios & Tsamis, 2010; cf. Casey, 1987).

In my view, then, in discussing the meaning or importance of places in the past, history and memory are crucial as are the activities of people using and perceiving these places. In the following, to illustrate these arguments in an archaeological context, Neolithic megalithic tombs in general and on the island of Öland in southeast Sweden in particular will be discussed.

## Biographies of Megalithic Monuments

Even though their 'original' meaning (if there was ever such a thing) may be long lost, in a biographical sense many prehistoric sites are still active places. Rather than 'the skeletons of dead places' (Relph, 1976, p. 32), prehistoric monuments in general are to be seen as living and experiencing actors with a rich and varied past, an active present and an unforeseen future (Holtorf, 1998a & 2000-2008). An excavation of a passage grave in this sense is just another (not necessarily the last) event in the life history of that particular monument. The meaning ascribed to a monument at a given time is dependent on social context and the interpretative horizons of the interpreter, and reflects the monument's 'effect-in-history' (Karlsson, 2000). The social context of a place changes through time, and the 'status' of a place may change completely based on seemingly minor events or changes in its life path (Papmehl-Dufay, 2012). Since social contexts are dynamic and overlap, the location will have multiple understandings and multiple biographies overlapping and changing over time (Karlsson, 2000; Clack & Brittain, 2011, p. 92ff).

Megalithic monuments in the form of passage tombs and dolmens in Scandinavia represent one of the earliest forms of monumental architecture in this part of the world, preceded only by the long mounds of the earliest Neolithic (Larsson, 2002). Within a relatively narrow time frame around 3400-3000 BC, thousands of megalithic tombs were constructed in Denmark and southern Sweden, in many cases in dense clusters resulting in 'megalithic areas' such as Falbygden in Västergötland, Sweden (Sjögren, 2011). The passage grave chambers typically contain the disarticulated skeletal remains of tens or even more than a hundred individuals (Ahlström, 2009, p. 81ff). In the Falbygden area, where some 250 passage tombs are concentrated in a restricted area of Cambro-Silurian sediments, the absolute majority of radiocarbon dated human bones from passage graves are of middle Neolithic age, and the construction and use of the tombs thus culturally connected to the TRB culture (see Midgley, 1992). In the mounds surrounding the chambers, however, burials of the Bronze and Iron Age are relatively common (Sjögren, 2004, p. 163f; Wallin, 2010, p. 40ff). In other cases the large buried collective in megalithic chambers is an illusion, and instead the accumulated bones reflect a very extensive period of use stretching over centuries or even millennia (Fornander, 2011, p. 59ff). Although activities post-dating the early and middle Neolithic are by no means controversial in connection to these monuments, and often evidenced in the artefact assemblages recovered, the use of passage graves in the later Neolithic and the Bronze Age has seldom been discussed in depth. In the context of the meaning of places, a number of issues arise that could be of relevance in the discussion. What were the reasons for returning to ancient places such as Neolithic megalithic tombs in, say, the Bronze Age? What kept these places alive, and what constituted their perceived meaning? And for that matter, what kind of significance made the place appropriate for the erection of a megalithic monument in the first place?

The construction of a megalithic monument in the early Neolithic no doubt signified a major physical alteration of that particular piece of land. In many cases, however, archaeological evidence has indicated the presence of earlier features at the site, making the conceptual alteration of the significance of that place possibly less revolutionary (e.g. Bradley, 1993, p. 22; Richards, 1996). Also, this means that the place where the tomb was constructed in these cases was already loaded with memory: the place already had a meaning and there already was a 'pastscape' connected with the place (see above). The megalithic monument was adding to this already existing biography in the same way as any spatially associated events would. Its monumentality ensured a long-lasting imprint in the meaning of the place:

it was built to last for a long time, and although its ideological foundations were eventually lost, its physical appearance persisted (more or less) and new 'memories' were, and still are, created concerning its origin and significance, contributing to the development of the meaning of the place at large.

The notion of pre-megalith meaning of megalithic sites may be of great importance to our understanding of the location of Neolithic monuments and possibly also the phenomenon of monument clusters. Looking in the other direction, monuments in general are built to communicate prospective memories (Holtorf, 1996 & 1997). The very acts of constructing a massive monument from enormous erratic boulders and placing the corpses of ancestors in the chamber indicate a perception of time directed towards an eternal future (Holtorf, 1996, p. 121). Megalithic tombs, by their material and monumental appearance, always seem to communicate permanence, and their message, although founded in a past time, is directed towards a future (Holtorf, 1996, p. 123). That is, Neolithic megalith builders probably imagined a long life history for their work, and in most cases this came to be realized in one way or another. The way this history developed, however, was governed by social and cultural factors of later times, and took turns that were not at first intended such as the blocking of the entrances of many tombs in the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (Persson & Sjögren, 2001, p. 214f) or the placing of cremations in the mound during the Bronze Age and Iron Age (Arne, 1909, p. 90). In Atlantic Scotland, Neolithic monuments have been reused or reinvented in the Bronze and Iron Age as dwellings (Hingley, 1996), and in Portugal, among other places, dolmens were converted into Christian churches in historical times (Holtorf, 1998b). These changes in meaning and practice associated with monuments are usually referred to as 'secondary use', although they are probably better understood as meaningful social contexts in their own right. In all these cases, even though the outcomes in our view were radically different, an existing feature has been interpreted by people and integrated into their own cosmology, be it through rebuilding, removing or adding to the original architecture. That is, new memories have been created concerning the history and significance of the monument, and these memories have added to the existing biography of the place. Even more profane reuse of an ancient site, such as the utilization of the southern wall of a dolmen chamber at Resmo, Öland in the construction of a 19th-century stone fence (figure 6.2), represents an interpretation of the existing feature that adds to previous understandings. This case also illustrates the multiple meanings and functions associated with places such as megalithic monuments (see Karlsson, 2000). At this point, on the one hand the Resmo dolmen was perceived as a convenient stone structure that

**Figure 6.2** A monument with multiple meanings



The dolmen RAÅ 32 at Resmo, Öland, the southern wall of which was incorporated into a 19th-century stone fence. Around the time of the photograph, stories were being told locally of ghastly creatures appearing at the site of the monument at night.

Photo from 1927 by Karl-Alfred Gustawsson. ATA archive, Stockholm

could save the workers some labour by being incorporated into the fence, and also as a prominent landmark that appropriately marked a border in the landscape. On the other hand, it was still perceived as a significant ancient place ('the giant stones'). In the 1930s, and probably also earlier, stories were being told of ghastly creatures appearing at the site of the monument: 'It was in a sunset. Then my mom and my sister saw a rider on a horse over by the grave. They were up in the clouds.' This story is a memory that contributes in a very distinct way to the perception of meaning of the place; by referring to a specific (real or fictional) past event associated with the place, it is given a specific meaning which in this case involves an interpretation of the site as a grave which is haunted by supernatural creatures.

The discussion above implies that the concepts of 'primary' and 'secondary' uses are in a sense unproductive in this context. The perception, interpretation and use by people of passage graves in periods succeeding their construction should be regarded as parts of the monument's life history and constituents of the meaning of the place, rather than as a secondary (=less important) phenomenon. In my view, this is in fact one of the great advantages of a

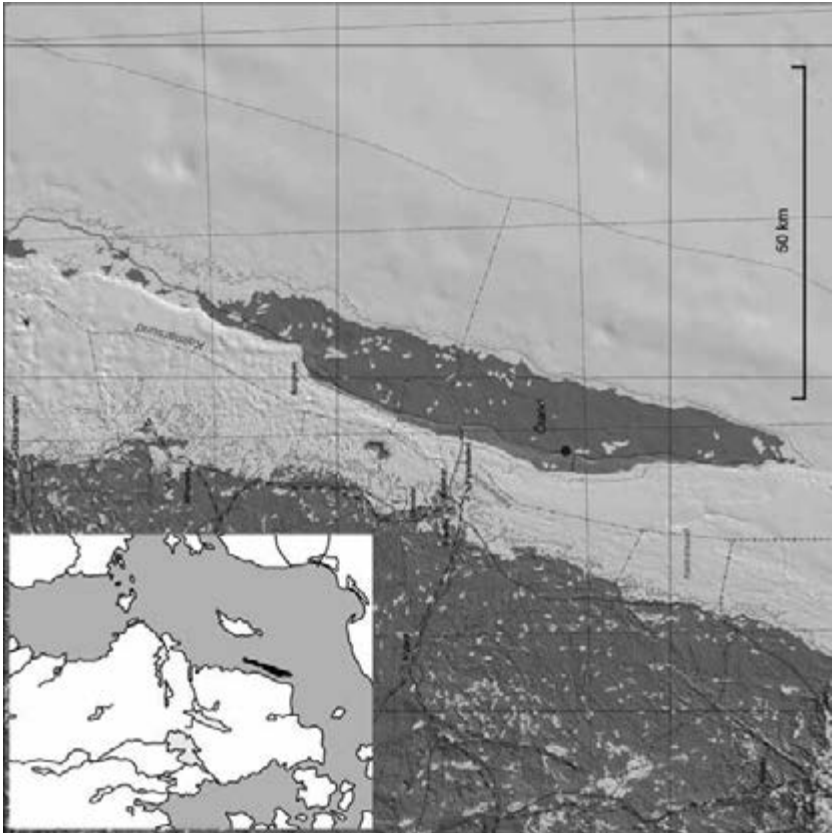
biographical approach, which regards the place and the monument itself as the focus around which a range of activities was performed at different times. Through memory, past landscapes have been reused and renegotiated, and old monuments have taken part in new social contexts in which remembrance and memory played an important role (Holtorf & Williams, 2006).

## Öland Today and in the Neolithic

The island of Öland is situated off the Swedish east coast in the Baltic Sea (figure 6.3). The elongated island measures 130 km in length and c. 20 km in width. Topography is generally flat, the island's highest point reaching c. 58 m above the present sea level. The bedrock consists of Ordovician limestone and, below the western slopes, Cambrian slate. Öland has long been a focus of interest for people of many disciplines and professions. Nowadays the island is a popular summer home for thousands of Swedish and foreign tourists, and the unique flora and fauna is a constant source of attraction for both scholars and laymen. UNESCO declared the southern third of the island a World Heritage Site in 2000, in recognition of its varied and well-preserved historical agrarian landscape.

With some 13,600 recorded ancient sites and monuments and massive numbers of stray finds of prehistoric artefacts, archaeologically Öland is one of the most productive regions in Sweden. The most eye-catching among the prehistoric remains on Öland are the Iron Age ring forts and the numerous Iron Age cemeteries spread all over the island. Here various types of mounds, stone settings, erected stones and stone circles together with hundreds of old windmills and miles upon miles of old stone fences combine to produce an intriguing image of an immediately present heritage, which has come to serve as a trademark for the region. The wealth of prehistoric remains all over the island contributes to create a notion of a very present past, and the time depth of visible structures in the landscape is considerable, thus the 'presence of the past' goes for past times as well. The Neolithic coastline is located some 8-12 m above that of today (see figure 6.3). Stray finds from the period are numerous all over the island, indicating a relatively dense settlement in the central and especially western parts of the island during the early and middle Neolithic (Åberg, 1923). On the southwest part of the island, in the parish of Resmo, a group of four Neolithic megalithic tombs is located (Papmehl-Dufay, 2006 & 2011). Three of the tombs are passage graves located a few hundred m apart in the village of Mysinge, and the fourth is a dolmen situated near Resmo church

**Figure 6.3** The island of Öland, with the Neolithic coastline (dark grey area = land in the Neolithic) and the Resmo area (black dot) indicated



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c. 2.5 km to the north of the passage graves. The southernmost of the graves was excavated in 1908 (Arne, 1909), and will be discussed in some detail below. The other three graves remain unexcavated.

Seen in relation to the distribution of megalithic monuments in Northern Europe, the Öland tombs are located in the eastern periphery, some 150 km to the east as the bird flies of the nearest concentration of megaliths on the Swedish mainland (see Pappmehl-Dufay, 2011, p. 132). One or possibly two dolmens are located on the island of Gotland to the east (Wallin, 2010), whereas the Öland passage graves represent the easternmost monuments of this type in Europe. The reasons behind their location have not been discussed much, except during the early 20th century when they were seen as evidence for a

demographic migration from southwest Scandinavia in the Neolithic (Arne, 1909, p. 95; Åberg, 1923, p. 25; Stenberger, 1948, p. 307ff). Recent isotope analyses have shown that the majority of the individuals interred in the Mysinge passage grave during the earliest phase in fact originated from Öland, and thus other explanations must be sought (see below; Fornander, 2011, p. 61).

From the perspective of landscape and place biographies, the isolated occurrence of megaliths on Öland is a highly interesting phenomenon. Rather than explaining it as a random phenomenon, we should accept that the Resmo area must have had some form of quality lacking in other neighbouring and more distant areas in which megaliths were not built. Whatever the nature of this quality, it would have been associated in some way with the meaning of place and thus either connected to the physical appearance/objective morphology of the area, to interactions and activities by and between people in the area, and/or to meanings and histories related to the collective memory of the place (Relph, 1976; Castello, 2010). In several cases, it has been argued that megalithic monuments refer to existing architectural or natural features, which would fit into the category of physical appearance (see Thomas, 1996, p. 90; Richards, 1996). At Resmo, the monumental and dramatic landscape setting on the crest of the western escarpment may be one such aspect of physical appearance; another is the rich spring located c. 500 m to the west of the dolmen at Resmo. However, in an objective sense none of these features are unique to this specific locality. In my view, while not excluding aspects of physical appearance altogether, memory and human interaction are likely to be involved in some way. An interesting archaeological find in this context is the rich culture layer and large amounts of high-quality early Neolithic pottery recently recovered at a site c. 250 m to the northwest of the Resmo dolmen (Papmehl-Dufay, 2009). The culture layer pre-dates the dolmen by a few centuries, providing undisputable evidence of intense activities in the immediate area preceding the construction of the megalith. The available evidence is enough to suggest that the place of this megalith, at the time of monument construction, already had a long history of human-environment interaction, memory and meaning. There should be little doubt that this was of some significance for the subsequent development at the site.

### **The Mysinge Passage Graves**

The three passage graves at Mysinge are situated c. 2.5 km to the south of the Resmo dolmen, on the western escarpment at c. 45 m above the present



**Figure 6.4** The passage grave at Mysinge as it appears today



Photo from the southeast by the author

sea level and some 200 m to the east of the steep slopes towards the sea in the west. Two of the graves are placed less than 100 m apart, and the third is located c. 500 m to the south of the other two. All three have a limited visibility of the sea, and the tomb entrances face away from the sea towards the vast limestone plateau of “the Great Alvar” in the east and southeast.

In contrast to the Resmo dolmen, there is as yet no distinctive evidence of pre-megalith activities in the immediate Mysinge area, although stray finds of flint indicate Neolithic activities. The roof slabs of one of the passage graves are covered with cup-marks supposedly dating to the Bronze Age, and to the south as well as to the north extensive burial grounds from the Bronze Age and the Iron Age are located. The southernmost of the passage graves (figure 6.4) has been excavated on several occasions, while the other two graves remain unexcavated. The results from the southernmost tomb, however, are revealing in terms of the history and meaning of the place, and some general conclusions can be drawn that are probably valid for all three of the graves.

An excavation in 1908 (Arne, 1909) of the southernmost of the Mysinge tombs concerned the chamber and the area immediately around the



chamber and the passage. The stratigraphy of the chamber consisted of more than 1 m of gravel, sand and soil containing large amounts of unburned human and animal bones as well as a number of artefacts. The bones were mostly found disarticulated, but three human individuals could be identified of which the bones were still in articulated position. In the uppermost part of the stratigraphy, in the gap between two of the large roof boulders, fragments of a ceramic vessel were found together with cremated bones, all covered by a limestone slab. Another small concentration of burned bone was found just outside the chamber wall to the west.

The artefacts recovered from the chamber and the passage include a varied set of objects made of flint, bone, antler, amber and pottery representing a wide chronological sequence from the late early Neolithic/early middle Neolithic and at least into the Bronze Age. The faunal assemblage from Mysinge has not been properly published, but recent analyses indicate the presence of a range of species including dog, fox, hare, cattle, sheep/goat, pig and duck (Ahlström, 2009, p. 166; Eriksson *et al.*, 2008, table 4). Three animal bones from the chamber have been radiocarbon dated: a sheep/goat was dated to the late Neolithic, a cow was dated to the early Iron Age and another sheep/goat was dated to between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008, table 5).

Additional excavations in the entrance area and through the mound (Arne, 1937; Alexandersson, 2005) have revealed details in the construction and successive use of the monument. In the uppermost layers of the mound and just outside the southwestern end of the chamber, numerous fragments of burned bone were found in 2004. Investigations in front of the tomb entrance have revealed two large sandstone slabs and a stone-packing ('entrance cairn') covering scatters and concentrations of flint, burned bone and pottery (Arne, 1937; Alexandersson, 2005). The pottery amounts to c. 2 kg, while the amounts of flint and burned bone are much more modest. The potsherds were found in several concentrations, possibly corresponding to individual vessels smashed and deposited in front of the tomb in the early Middle Neolithic (Alexandersson, 2005, p. 8ff). Stratigraphic observations show that the entrance cairn was constructed at a later stage in the use-history of the tomb as a grave, possibly in the late Neolithic or the Bronze Age (Wollentz, 2011). This would correspond to observations in Scania as well as in Falbygden, both in Sweden, where the construction of entrance cairns is often interpreted as a symbolic closing of the grave chamber (Persson & Sjögren, 2001, p. 214).

The Mysinge skeletal assemblage has been subjected to a range of laboratory analyses including stable carbon, nitrogen, sulphur and strontium isotope measurements as well as mitochondrial DNA analyses on human

and faunal remains from the chamber (Lidén, 1995&1996; Kanstrup, 2004; Eriksson *et al.*, 2008; Linderholm, 2008; Fornander, 2011). The total number of people buried is difficult to establish, but the minimum number of individuals has been estimated at 56, cremated bones not included (Ahlström, 2009, p. 83). Thirty-four of these have been radiocarbon dated, revealing a period of use for the chamber covering a span of almost 2500 years (c. 3500-1000 BC), seemingly with some distinct hiatuses (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008; Ahlström, 2009). Of the dated individuals, twelve can be chronologically attributed to the late early Neolithic/early middle Neolithic, eleven to the late middle Neolithic, one to the late Neolithic and finally ten individuals to the early and middle Bronze Age. These figures make the Mysinge passage grave unique in that the majority of the 34 dated individuals post-date the Early/Middle Neolithic phase (see Fornander, 2011, p. 58).

### **Conclusion: Places That Matter**

The Öland megaliths illustrate some key problems related to the discussion on the meaning and importance of place above. At one level, the very location of four tombs to such a restricted area in the far eastern periphery of the megalith tradition presents us with questions regarding place and landscape: why here, and why more than one within such a limited area? At another level, the excavated material from the southernmost of the graves emphasizes issues on different phases of use as well as change and continuity of meaning at a particular place in the landscape. And thirdly, the discussion at large connects to issues of collective memory and the use of archaeological sites in periods post-dating their original cultural context (Holtorf, 1996, p. 125ff; Harvey, 2001). Through the biographical approach adopted above, these places can be viewed from the perspective of meaningful places in the present, at every individual occasion of cultural interaction. Accordingly, the separation of primary and secondary use is left in favour of an appreciation of the meaning and importance of the place at each particular time of use.

As discussed above, the Resmo/Mysinge area probably possessed some form of quality that triggered the exceptional development of monument building in the late Early Neolithic. The manifest expression involved in megalith building arguably emphasized aspects of permanence, making visible and concretizing people's sense of belonging to a particular area (Bradley, 1998, p. 63ff). Through their permanence and visibility, as well as

through the practice of physical remains of dead people being placed and kept within the chambers, megalithic tombs can be viewed as embodiments of the concept of place attachment. The same can be argued about their often long use-history as sites for burial: by returning to the manifest monuments of old and performing rituals there connected to death and the ancestors, a sense of rootedness was established and maintained among the living that connected to that place and area. The prominence and visibility of the megalithic tombs provided fuel for this attachment and may have contributed to a sense of geographically connected cultural identity. A cluster of monuments in this sense can be understood not primarily as territorial markers for separate families but rather as an expression of a particularly strong attachment to place.

Among the 34 dated individuals from the Mysinge passage grave, twelve can be chronologically connected to the late early Neolithic/early middle Neolithic covering a period of c. 500 years around 3400-2900 cal. BC. The available data thus suggest that less than one individual per generation was being buried in the tomb during this phase. Roughly the same appears to be the case during the following phase of use, during the late middle Neolithic at around 2800-2300 cal. BC to which period eleven individuals are dated. The ten individuals dated to the Late Neolithic or the Bronze Age are spread over a period of c. 1200 years (c. 2200-1000 BC), i.e. less than one individual interred per century. It should be recalled, though, that the calibrations are not all statistically separable and thus many of the individuals could be more or less contemporary, and also that at least 22 individuals and probably many more remain undated (Ahlström, 2009). Still it seems quite possible that the buried collective in this case is an illusion created by the extremely long period of use. The act of interring in all probability was connected to individuals, not the collective in the first place. The time elapsing between individual interments may sometimes have been considerable, and thus memory and remembrance are critical factors in understanding the long-term development at the site.

This is further illustrated by the way human remains were treated. The majority of the human bones were found in the lowermost part of the stratigraphy, while animal bones were concentrated to the densely compacted uppermost part (Arne, 1909, p. 90). That this in fact reflects a chronological sequence is strengthened by radiocarbon dates of human and animal bones: while the humans date from the early Neolithic to the middle Bronze Age, the three dated animals span from the late Neolithic to historical times (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008; see above). Thus, the c. 2500-year-long practice of placing human bodies in the chamber seems

to have been overlapped by a lengthy practice of placing animal carcasses there. The disarticulated human bones were concentrated to the short sides of the chamber, and only three skeletons were found in partly articulated positions, one of which was found crouching with hands in front of the face (Arne, 1909, p. 91). A recent re-evaluation convincingly showed that this body was originally placed in the chamber in a squatting position (Ahlström, 2009, p. 69). It could therefore be argued that the seemingly chaotic arrangement of bones in the chamber is the result of taphonomic processes and that at least some of the bodies were placed sitting in the chamber in a complete state and left to slowly decay. The concentration of disarticulated human remains at the short ends of the chamber would fit this interpretation, representing repeated clearing away of 'old' bodies to make place for new ones. Unfortunately, there is no information from the excavation about where in the stratigraphy the more complete individuals were found.

If this scenario is accepted, we are faced with a situation where the handling of corpses at Mysinge was not radically different in the middle Neolithic and the early Bronze Age respectively, despite the chronological difference of more than two millennia. Apart from being remarkable in the purely chronological sense, this would also stand in sharp contrast to the general burial customs of the later periods concerned. Again, the critical factor must be memory: if several generations passed between each interment during some periods, but the treatment of human remains nonetheless remained more or less the same for some 100 generations, what were the underlying mechanisms? What were the reasons for people to return to the grave again and again, treating the bodies of particular deceased individuals in the way people did in the distant past?

To make sense of this, we have to consider events other than interments taking place at the tomb. The place was never neutral between the possibly rare occasions of burial; instead the extremely long tradition of activities at the site indicates that many different events took place here that kept the meaning of the place alive (cf. Edmonds, 1999, p. 60ff). The evidence for offerings in front of the entrance in the early middle Neolithic (Alexandersson, 2005) reflects a common phenomenon noted at many passage tombs in southern Sweden. Of course, this was probably but one of countless activities taking place in connection to the monument, not all connected directly to interments. If memory is one key to the understanding of how and why the tomb was used over such extensive periods of time, the great variety of activities performed at the site is another. The passage grave at Mysinge was not just a place where dead

ancestors were placed and kept. The place and its biographical history are central to the significance of the tomb; placing certain individuals in the chamber in the early Bronze Age makes a very clear reference both back in time and towards an eternal future, just because it is an ancient megalithic monument loaded with retrospective and prospective memory (Holtorf, 1996). Also, it illustrates very clearly a sense of rootedness and attachment to this particular place and area among the people involved in using the monument.

The attitude towards the place and its social significance has varied over time, and its biography continued after it ceased to be used as a burial chamber for humans. In fact, to date we are dealing with a period of c. 5400 years (!) during which the Mysinge tomb has existed and people in the area have had some form of relationship to it. To this should be added the unknown period preceding the construction of the monument during which the place was loaded with meaning. The range of events and actions that have been performed in connection to the place, and the number of people that have passed by, are just beyond comprehension. Cornelius Holtorf (2008, see this volume) even argued that the shifting character and identity of monuments over time is so extensive that we cannot even speak of it as one place, but rather as many places, and hence that the biographic approach is misleading in the sense that it depends too much on the assumption of 'an assumed unchanging essence of the object' (Holtorf, 2008, p. 423). This certainly is an interesting and valid point of discussion. However, even though the physical appearance of, as well as the cognitive associations with, the place may change completely and numerous times during a monument's lifetime, I would argue that it is precisely by regarding it as one and the same place that we can understand the development of meaning at the site. If we were to regard the monument as it was perceived during each phase as separate places, we would lose one of the most important aspects of meaning of place, namely memory. It is through place-specific references back (and forward) in time that each phase perceives and ascribes meaning to the monument: the ghost stories connected to the Resmo dolmen in the early 20th century are clearly connected to a memory concerning the meaning of the place in the past, i.e. its nature as an ancient grave. This connection is very specifically place-bound, and would be difficult to comprehend if the continuity of place was dismissed. To write up a complete biographic history of a monument such as the Mysinge passage grave is neither necessary nor possible, but to discard the biographical approach altogether is to deny the role of memory in connection to the meaning of place. Needless to say, this I think would be a mistake.

## Epilogue: The Meaning of Archaeology

From what has been said above, the meaning of a place consists of its physical properties together with what has taken place there and the events that are celebrated and remembered by people. Without memory in the broad sense, places would lose much of their meaning. Place attachment always involves a portion of memory; of events, actors and emotions associated with the place, and memories in terms of knowledge concerning the anticipated history and nature of the place. In short, 'dead' places and objects do not mean much if there is no 'memory' connected to them. An old painting that has been lying in the attic for decades may be regarded as worthless, until the day the antiques expert provides a memory: it is actually a long-lost and extremely valuable Renoir! The painting instantly turns from being worthless into a veritable treasure, simply by being (re-)connected to a memory (in this case in the form of knowledge). The same goes for all kinds of objects, as well as for places: a particular patch of ground beside the road in Ljungby, southern Sweden, is today an important memorial for thousands of thrash metal fans around the globe, simply through the memory of a bus accident on 27 September 1986 during which Cliff Burton, bass player of Metallica, tragically died. This is one of countless examples where the biographical history of a place, and the memory of specific events, is absolutely critical to the development of meaning of the place. I argue that this is precisely what archaeology does: through excavation and interpretation, archaeologists create additional memories that bring new meaning to past objects and places. This is not to say that other memories, such as folktales or ghost stories, are less valid: instead, all contribute to create and maintain a meaning of the place, archaeology included.

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## 7 What Future for the Life-History Approach to Prehistoric Monuments in the Landscape?

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### **Abstract**

In this chapter I discuss theoretical notions such as the meanings of a monument, the historization of time, temporal collage and the landscape's multi-temporality in relation to studying the biographies of prehistoric monuments in the landscape. In the second part I draw on texts by Jorge Luis Borges to discuss some of the inherent difficulties of this approach. Implied assumptions of a single and unchanging identity over time of prehistoric monuments in the landscape are problematic. I conclude by suggesting that the life-history approach to monuments and the concept of landscape biographies need to be developed further, and ultimately overcome, as new approaches of landscape research emerge.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, monuments, temporal collage, Borges, identity

Although things are not living beings, in a metaphorical sense they can be considered to have lives. Things are made; they often do something; and over time many things move from place to place. Their meanings and functions change in different contexts. As time goes by things age and eventually they end up at a final resting place where they gradually disintegrate. Things can reach very different ages, from a few minutes to many millennia, but once dead only very few are brought back, for example as antiques or collectables, and given additional meanings in a new life. Accounts of such life-histories are effectively biographies of things. In an often cited article, Igor Kopytoff proposed some general guidelines on how to write the biography of a thing:

In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its 'status' and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from

and who made it? What had been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized 'ages' or periods in the thing's 'life', and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (Kopytoff, 1986, 66-7).

Such biographies take things not as ready-made objects but rather as works in progress (or decline) in a continuous state of becoming (or vanishing). My main examples in this paper are prehistoric monuments in the landscape. Investigating their life histories is to ask how they have been transformed over time and, in turn, transformed the landscapes within which they were situated. Unfortunately, the archaeologists' interest has often been limited to what might be described as the birth and early childhood of monuments, i.e. their origins and original uses in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, as well as the dissection and mummification of their corpses, i.e. the treatment they received in recent centuries as ruins and heritage sites. The changing fortunes of the adult and ageing monuments, i.e. how they have been re-used and re-interpreted over several millennia, have been missing in many archaeologists' stories.

However, already in 1993 Richard Bradley pointed out that continuous re-interpretations are part of the very logic of monument building. It is just unfortunate that he chose the term 'afterlife' for denoting the history of megaliths during later periods, for it may be the afterlife of their builders but it is not that of the monuments themselves, which were in many cases still alive, having quite probably been designed to outlive their builders. Monuments built during the Neolithic had long and exciting histories for centuries and millennia to come, and some are still very much part of current affairs even now (see Daniel, 1972; Holtorf, 1995 & 2000-2008; Omland, 2010). Some examples for long-term histories of prehistoric monuments include Mats Burström's investigations of various sites in Sweden (1993), Mark Patton's work on the megalith of La Hogue Bie on Jersey (1996), Emma Blake's research on "four millennia of becoming" of Sardinia's nuraghi (1998), and Håkan Karlsson's account of the changing interpretations and uses of a megalith known as 'Dwarf's House' in Lindome in West Sweden (2000). The English monument of Stonehenge is exceptional also in that it has already had several biographers, among them Christopher Chippindale (1994) and Barbara Bender (1998), and that it may be more politically disputed now than it has ever been before. In my own previous research, I focussed on the changing fate of circa 1200 megaliths in the northern German region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Holtorf, 1998 &

**Figure 7.1** A prehistoric monument – cargo from the past imported to a present landscape



Falköping, Ängshögens södra gånggrift (no. 9)  
Photo: Cornelius Holtorf 1999

2000-2008). All these studies are not preoccupied with hunting for the respective monuments' lost 'original' meanings. Perhaps the authors had taken to heart Bjørnar Olsen's (1990, 200) earlier insight that even if we should come across ideas close to those held by their prehistoric builders, nothing says that these should be privileged over other people's ideas about these monuments.

The histories of prehistoric monuments are closely related to how subsequent societies have been dealing with relics of the past as 'cargo to the present' (Dening, 1996, 43 & 46). As Greg Dening explained 'relics of the past cross all the cultural boundaries that lie between past and present, and when they do they are reconstituted in the relations and means of production of each cultural zone they enter' (1996, 43). Accordingly, during their long existence prominent ancient monuments featured in subsequent cultural memories: they played important roles in the history cultures of various societies and acted as visible time marks in the landscape, referring people back to the distant past and prompting them to treat them in ways true to their own culture (figure 7.1; Holtorf 2000-2008, 2.0, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). In this sense, the past has never been really past but very much part of various presents and even futures (see also Roymans *et al.*, 2009).

## The Unbelievable Mess of the Past

These ideas resonate strongly with the hermeneutic perspective of literary critic A.V. Ashok. To him, monuments as well as texts 'are not a changeless eternity of essence but an altering history of contingency' (Ashok, 2007, 1). In contrast to a hermeneutics of recovery that corresponds to the archaeological obsession with origins and seeks (in vain) to reconstruct meanings of the past, Ashok propagates a hermeneutics of reception in which 'there is meaning only because of the future' (Ashok, 2007, 1; see also Olsen, 1990; Holtorf, 2000-8: 2.4, 3.10). Drawing, among others, on Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, and taking some of my own ideas to task, he asserts that instead of lamenting the impossibility of recovering past meanings, a hermeneutics of reception celebrates the unfolding and increasing meanings of monuments over time. It takes as its starting point the insight that 'a monument of the past is a structure of meaning to be *received* and not *recovered*' and culminates in the conclusion that 'the meaning of a monument of the past is the future of the monument' (Ashok, 2007, 13).

If the meanings of prehistoric monuments are in fact their futures, we have come a long way from the way archaeology normally perceives its task and subject matter: the understanding of ancient sites and finds by reconstructing an essentializing meaning of the past. Denning and Ashok provide strong support for my own endeavours in challenging the linear, chronographical trajectories of history and evolution along which archaeologists often tend to hang up their narratives about the human past (see e.g. Holtorf, 2002a & 2002b; Holtorf & Williams, 2006). It is inappropriate to assume that every age is essentially self-contained in its own specific location on time's arrow, independent from what came before or after. The opposite is in fact the case. Past, present and future cannot be separated from each other. In a conversation with Bruno Latour, Michel Serres presented the parable of the handkerchief to formulate a powerful objection to the linear way of ordering time:

If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed. If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant. [...] As we experience time [...] it resembles this crumpled version much more than the flat, overly simplified one (Serres & Latour, 1995, 60).

Indeed, elements from past periods shape each present as much as aspirations for future presents. We simply cannot isolate and study any period 'by itself': it is always also *its own past* as well as *our past*. At the same time, people's thoughts and actions in the past were motivated by *their own future*, just like our own thoughts and actions (e.g. regarding past remains and people) are motivated by *our future*. Past, present and future are thus constantly intermingled with each other. In discussing these complexities, Niklas Luhmann once suggested a historization of time: any present's past and future horizons contain in turn their own temporal horizons, i.e. their own pasts and futures (Luhmann, 1982, 305). Hence, *past presents* must be seen in the context of both past futures and past pasts, just as *future presents* will be influenced by both future futures and future pasts: 'Historical time is constituted as the continuity and irreversibility of this movement of past/present/future as a whole' (Luhmann, 1982, 307).

All landscapes are therefore in fact multi-temporal (Holtorf & Williams, 2006; Roymans *et al.*, 2009). They mix old and new, representing what Kevin Lynch described as a 'temporal collage' – 'the visible accumulation of overlapping traces from successive periods, each trace modifying and being modified by the new additions' (Lynch, 1972, 171). Laurent Olivier once illustrated a similar argument about duration, memory and the character of archaeological remains with a powerful image:

From the place where I am standing [in spring 1999], the 1990s are invisible on this quiet morning: the present here is not made up of a perspective of late-20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, with their white-tiled facades, brand-new cars moving along the streets, people walking about in fashionable clothes; one sees this fiction only in museums. Right now, the present here is made up of a series of past durations that makes the present multi-temporal. The past is in the present, it is mainly the present. What will remain from this present instant is possibly an imperceptible layer of things, deposited on the surface of a huge accumulation of past temporalities, some of them relating to the most remote pasts: in the fields around, beside motorways and supermarkets, flakes of flint tools show through the surface, together with fossilized shells; down by the river, dark waters silently roll over rocks that came here millions of years ago. The present here is this imperceptible and continual process of increasing the unbelievable mess of the past (Olivier, 2001, 66-7).

This last sentence also describes very well the situation at Monte da Igreja near Évora in the central Alentejo, Portugal, where I have been conducting



**Figure 7.2** An unbelievable mess of many pasts in, at, on, and around the megalith of Monte da Igreja, Évora, Portugal



Archaeological excavations in 2006, location of shotgun shooting and campfires during the 20th century, trigonometrical point of the late 19th century, a resting place in the 11th century, Roman coins and rubble from the 4th century AD, pot sherds of the Bronze Age, a burial chamber from circa 2900-2800 BC, etc.

Photo: Cornelius Holtorf 2006.

fieldwork since 2000 (Holtorf, 2002a). The site at which we are working is relatively inconspicuous, consisting mainly of a small passage grave surrounded by some remains of Roman agricultural use of the area and a derelict trigonometrical point from the late 19th century (figure 7.2). But our investigations showed that the site has in fact a rich life history that has left behind a ‘mess of the past’. Human activities in different periods in, at, on, and around the megalith included the following (among others):

- members of an unknown prehistoric community constructing a megalithic chamber as a burial site during the Neolithic period;
- people using the chamber again during the Late Bronze Age;
- farmers building and using a stone building (10.5 x 12.5m) during approximately the first half of the fourth century AD, featuring large storage vessels, various kinds of coarse ceramics, a hearth, small glass containers, a tiled roof as well as a small hoard of coins kept in a small pot under the roof;

- the same farmers (we think) keeping animals in a large enclosure surrounding the megalith;
- a traveller resting on a conveniently large stone, losing an Arabic coin from the eleventh century;
- land surveyors constructing and employing a large stone tower as a trigonometrical point in the landscape, probably during the second half of the 19th century;
- other surveyors placing nearby a land marker stone (TC) and recording various geographical properties in a file, possibly during the early 20th century;
- several groups of visitors lighting campfires near the trigonometrical point, at various times during the 20th century;
- a number of visiting hunters shooting with shotguns at birds or other animals from near the trigonometrical point, for at least a few decades and probably until today;
- various people, including some of us and people we know, losing or discarding an iron nut, a Coke can, cigarette ends and plasters, among various other things, during the 1990s and early 2000s;
- Norbert Heins, our artist in residence, creating an installation in 2002 entitled *Museu In Situ* which is now covered by soil (Holtorf, 2004);
- an archaeological team surveying and excavating since 2000.

The challenge for our project is (at least) twofold. Firstly, we want to do justice to all these distinct events and processes to the same extent and give them all our full attention: within the project, evidence from all periods counts equally. Secondly, we want to appreciate the various interrelations between all of these events and processes as part of a multi-temporal collage that has been developing over many years. In other words, as much as each episode needs to be understood in its own terms, in line with the thread of my argument thus far, we must also try getting to grips with the task of seeing the monument as a long-standing time mark referring different people back to a distant past and prompting them to responses of their own, which together amount to a collection of incrementally unfolding meanings. In doing so, our work, like the monument as such, also implies and evokes certain futures (Holtorf, 2004; Holtorf & Williams, 2006).

The metaphor of a monument's life history includes *all* its transformations over time and *all* the landscapes it transformed until the present day, whether or not that involved any notion that the megalith was 'old' and from another time period or not. All these challenges require us to develop archaeological methodologies that have not been tested before. I am not

certain yet how we will eventually interpret the mess of the past at Monte da Igreja and the changing meanings of the monument, nor do I know how the project will eventually be written up, but I know that one of the challenges is to do justice to the insight that the meaning of the site and the monument has always been its future, not its past.

## The Problem of Identity

I have argued thus far that elements of both past and future significantly influence the framework of meaning in each present. What appears to be one and the same thing, for instance a prehistoric monument, may have meant, means, and will mean very different things in the contexts of different pasts, presents, and futures. Arguably the meaning of any ancient relic is already changed drastically by simply being seen, read and preserved in different contexts (Denning, 1996, 42-43; Lowenthal, 1992, 185-186). Indeed, the question is to what extent the very different perceptions and interpretations at various times mean that there may not be such a thing as a 'single' monument in the first place.

Is every monument many monuments? Such matters have been explored by the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). Due to its very high topical relevance I am turning my attention in this section to a literary work, which arguably can be seen as a literary monument. One of Borges' most intriguing stories is about Pierre Menard, the fictitious author of the work *Don Quixote* (Borges, 1970a):

This work, perhaps the most significant of our time, consists of the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of chapter twenty-two. ...

[Pierre Menard] did not want to compose another *Quixote* – which is easy – but *the Quixote itself*. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes. ...

To compose the *Quixote* at the beginning of the 17th century was a reasonable undertaking, necessary and perhaps even unavoidable; at the beginning of the 20th, it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that three hundred years have gone by, filled with exceedingly complex events. Among them, to mention only one, is the *Quixote* itself ...

Cervantes's text and Menard's are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. ... It is a revelation to compare Menard's *Don Quixote* with Cervantes's. The latter, for example, wrote (part one, chapter nine):  
 '... truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counsellor.'  
 Written in the 17th century, written by the 'lay genius' Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other, writes:  
 '... truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counsellor.'  
 History, the *mother* of truth: the idea is astounding. Menard, a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an inquiry into reality but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what has happened; it is what we judge to have happened. The final phrases – *exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counsellor* – are brazenly pragmatic.  
 The contrast in style is also vivid. The archaic style of Menard – quite foreign, after all – suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of his forerunner, who handles with ease the current Spanish of his time.  
 (Borges, 1970a, 65-69).

Beside the ironic point of the story itself, there is an additional irony in the fact that Borges' own interpretation of both Cervantes' and Menard's (i.e. Borges' own) texts is not neutral but is itself dependent on his time and context – and the same can even be said about my as well as *your* reading of the cited passage. Whereas for Borges the story is read (and indeed written) as some kind of intellectual performance or game, I read it as an argument about archaeological monuments, and you...?

In other words, a text's meaning can change so comprehensively from one context to another that it becomes almost non-sensical to insist that the actual words have remained the same. Similarly, a material object whose meaning is transformed from a piece of wood to a mask immersed in religious traditions to an acquired art object to an archived museum piece to an exchanged collector's item to an auctioned artefact associated with Captain Cook to a showpiece of Native American art (Feest, 1998) is probably far better understood as multiple things than as a single thing.

It is therefore utterly problematic to devise a research project that focuses on the history of a given object, such as a megalith – as if anything could stay the same somehow in its core, while everything else around it changes. In the case of prehistoric monuments we know that their actual physicality has not stayed the same, as people and natural forces have kept chipping

**Figure 7.3** A single monument or several? Metamorphosis from prehistoric menhir to Christian religious site to tourist attraction



Menhir of Saint Uzec, Pleumeur-Bodou, Brittany  
Photo: Cornelius Holtorf 1993

away at or adding to them over many centuries. In this process of a slow but steady metamorphosis of monuments, drastic changes of meaning are even less surprising than in the case of virtually unchanged written texts (figure 7.3). Does each prehistoric monument then constitute multiple things rather than a single thing?

As far as the genre of human biographies is concerned, arguably biographies are only possible and interesting because of the continuity of consciousness in every human being, allowing them to remember the past and hope for the future in every present. This ability is something that all humans share so that, to some extent, we can identify with the object of study in every biography, even though humans' lives too can be subjected to drastic changes and discontinuities. It is obviously impossible for us to identify in the same way with texts or material objects that are not literally alive (Jung, 2012).

'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' is the title of another story by Borges (1970b). In what is perhaps the most archaeological of his brilliant short stories,

he argues that equality and identity are very different things. Why do we tend to consider two things as different or unrelated when they are equal in temporal and different in spatial location, but as identical or related when they are equal in spatial and different in temporal location? As an example Borges presents what is known in Tlön as the paradox of the nine copper coins:

*On Tuesday, X crosses a deserted road and loses nine copper coins; on Thursday, Y finds in the road four coins, somewhat rusted by Wednesday's rain. On Friday [afternoon], Z discovers three coins in the road. On Friday morning, X finds two coins in the corridor of his house. [...] It is absurd to imagine that four of the coins have not existed between Tuesday and Thursday, three between Tuesday and Friday afternoon, two between Tuesday and Friday morning. It is logical to think that they have existed – at least in some secret way, hidden from the comprehension of men – at every moment of those three periods.*

The language of Tlön resists the formulation of this paradox; most people did not even understand it. The defenders of common sense at first did no more than negate the veracity of the anecdote. They repeated that it was a verbal fallacy [...]: the verbs 'find' and 'lose' [...] presuppose the identity of the first and the last nine coins. [...] 'somewhat rusted by Wednesday's rain' [...] presupposes what is trying to be demonstrated: the persistence of the four coins from Tuesday to Thursday. They explained that *equality* is one thing and *identity* another, and formulated a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*: the hypothetical case of nine men who on nine successive nights suffer a severe pain. Would it not be ridiculous – they questioned – to pretend that this pain is one and the same? [...] They argued: if equality implies identity, one would also have to admit that the nine coins are one. (Borges, 1970b, 35-36).

This passage amounts to another critique of the logic of artefact biographies, for the appearance of monuments may be similar or equal in different periods but this is not to say that they all are *identical*. In short, there is nothing that justifies a stable identity of a single monument or object over time (as in Michener, 1965; Feest, 1998), and thus its legitimate choice as a self-contained research project. The durable appearance of a material object in the present, seemingly its material essence, is misleading. In this sense, the life-history approach to monuments is flawed and in need of a thorough overhaul. It depends too much on an assumed unchanging essence of the object whose life is being studied (Holtorf, 2002b). Who is to say that a prehistoric burial site is identical with a subsequent ritual site with

Figure 7.4 An outstanding monument of the 20th century



The shopping centre Kupolen, Borlänge  
Photo: Cornelius Holtorf 2003

a subsequent mound with a subsequent stone quarry with a subsequent ancient ruin with a subsequent heritage site, etc.?

In order to pursue the changing meanings of monuments across different ages, a more consistent project than my earlier one (Holtorf, 2000-2008) may better have investigated many different sites rather than the same group of megaliths over and over. A more appropriate selection of outstanding monuments from different ages (actualizing their changing meanings) could have included megaliths of the Neolithic, impressive barrows of the Bronze and Iron Ages, imposing churches of the Middle Ages, prominent war memorials of the early 20th century, and nuclear power stations or impressive shopping centres of the late 20th century (figure 7.4). Only by changing focus to different objects for different presents could there be any realistic chance that a consistent field is indeed being studied. As you can read in *Alice in Wonderland*, 'it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place' (46). That is why the life-history approach to monuments needs to be developed further, and ultimately overcome.



## Conclusion: From Monuments to Landscapes

As far as landscapes are concerned, the argument I made in this paper concerning monuments has relevance even to entire landscapes (see also Holtorf & Williams, 2006). Any monument is meaningful only within a larger landscape that provides a context or, hermeneutically speaking, literally a horizon. In that sense, there is a landscape aspect implied throughout my deliberations about the life histories of prehistoric monuments. In addition, I would argue that the life histories of entire landscapes are subject to some of the same concerns I discussed regarding monuments. Even ancient landscapes are initially 'cargo to the present', to use Greg Denning's (1996, 43, 46) phrase once again. Landscapes, too, consist of elements of many different periods inseparably intermingled with each other. I discussed this earlier with reference to Lynch's notion of a 'temporal collage' and Olivier's description of a multi-temporal landscape that effectively creates an 'unbelievable mess of the past' (2001, 67). From a hermeneutical perspective, landscapes, like monuments, are constantly received rather than recovered and, again as with monuments, their meaning is arguably the future. But these similarities in appreciating landscapes and monuments from the perspective of the life-history metaphor also mean that the same theoretical problems emerge.

Given the changing meanings of landscape over time, can we really speak of a single, identical landscape that goes through transformations over time? Are there not rather a series of parallel and successive landscapes, however much they may resemble each other, that are all meaningful in their own particular way in particular contexts but never together, as the life-history approach would imply? Is the landscape biography approach (Roymans *et al.*, 2009) not in itself only one particular approach to landscape that has gained some currency in our time but that will also eventually be succeeded by other approaches? Although the biographical approach easily gives the impression that all that landscape research in the future will have to do is to refine our understanding of past periods, and add additional life phases to the landscape biography that already exists, I rather think that this will not be the case and instead entirely new approaches to landscape will emerge, just like they have previously come about in regular intervals. As there is arguably no continuity in landscape over time, neither is there a continuity of landscape research over time. The temporality of landscape will itself turn out to be a rather transitory phenomenon. Heraclitus said that you never step twice into the same river for other waters are ever flowing onto you; the same can be said both regarding landscape and landscape research.



We may not know where landscape research is going to be heading in the future but we know that it will take all the running we can do to keep in the same place.

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## 8 'To Preserve the Terrain in its Present State'

Authorship and Conservation in the *Eerder Achterbroek* Protected Landscape Area (The Netherlands)

*Michiel Purmer*

### Abstract

The *Eerder Achterbroek*, part of the Eerde country estate, is an exceptionally well-preserved enclosed landscape in the province of Overijssel, The Netherlands. In this chapter two authors of this agricultural landscape are identified: the last owner from the baronial family, Philip Dirk van Pallandt, and the current owner, *Natuurmonumenten*. Van Pallandt, who inherited the estate in 1913, was an idealistic man with strong ideas about nature and landscape architecture. He made his own contributions to the estate, but respected the framework of the existing historical landscape. Due to the financial burden of the inheritance, he was forced to sell parts of the estate. In 1949 *Natuurmonumenten*, a non-governmental organization aiming at the preservation of nature and landscape in the Netherlands, bought the *Eerder Achterbroek*. *Natuurmonumenten* was well aware of the historical value of this purchase. The management since then has been aesthetic and conservative. The landscape was to be preserved as it was. Historical research, as presented in this chapter, has pointed out that the *Eerder Achterbroek* is not a textbook example of an east-Netherlands enclosed landscape, but is strongly influenced by the identified authors. The outcomes of this research, a combination of field study, oral history and archival research, are useful for the management, which is changing its aims from aesthetics to heritage preservation.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, landscape history, nature conservation, enclosed land, landscape change

Figures 8.1a-b Two oaks, photographed in 1949 and again in 2009



Source: photo 1949 Van Dijk photo collection, Library Natuurmonumenten, 's-Graveland  
Photo 2009 Michiel Purmer

## Introduction

In 1949 a small series of photographs was taken on the country estate of Eerde (province of Overijssel, The Netherlands). The photographs, that were probably commissioned by the new owner, the *Vereniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten in Nederland* (Society for the Protection of Natural Monuments in the Netherlands; shortly known as 'Natuurmonumenten'), for publicity purposes, ended up in the archives of the Society. When visiting the exact locations of these pictures, the resemblance is often striking. The two oaks in the photo (see figure 8.1a and b) hardly seem to have grown in the past 60 years. This is a typical situation for the landscape of this country estate, but a rarity elsewhere in The Netherlands.

In this chapter I present the results of a research project on the landscape history of the Eerde country estate, focusing on its agricultural landscape, the so-called *Eerder Achterbroek*. By a combination of fieldwork, archival research and oral history I try to explain the forms and structures of the

Figure 8.2 The Eerder Achterbroek, 2008



Characteristics visible on this picture are the unpaved roads, many oaks and the old farmhouse. Note the narrow bike lane on the right: former tenants told us that the bike lanes were constructed in the 1930s, commissioned by Philip Dirk van Pallandt to accommodate cyclists.

Photo: Michiel Purmer

present landscape (see figure 8.2). In this perspective, I also try to identify some of the authors of the landscape, as described by Marwyn Samuels (1979), Jan Kolen (2005) and others in their publications on biographies of landscape.

### **The Eerder Achterbroek Project in the Context of Dutch Landscape Research**

Historical geography in the Netherlands has a long tradition of applied research for planning. Much research – and most of the researchers – aimed at mapping landscape relics. The remaining research aimed at obtaining a better understanding of the historical developments of landscape patterns. Perhaps a typical Dutch tradition has been the close connection between historical and physical geography. Many research questions came from physical geographers and focused on human influences on physical landscapes. This stimulated a static view of the landscape. The common idea was that the landscape developed gradually until the 19th century, and was rapidly changed during the 20th century by intensification, scale enlargement and land consolidations. In this perspective, the Dutch landscape around the turn of the century was romanticized as the heyday of the historical landscape. This was in line with the opinions of nature conservationists that biodiversity was at its peak in the period around the 1900s. From the 1970s onwards, historical geographers developed a more dynamic vision of the history of the landscape, which gave attention to the many transformations that had taken place (see for the development of historical geography in the Netherlands Braaksma *et al.*, 2010). Research became more interdisciplinary, involving archaeologists, historians, architectural historians, ecologists and others (see for example Spek, 2004 and 2006).

Only in recent years has the influence of humanistic and (new) cultural geography brought new questions into the debate, particularly aimed at gaining better insights into the human factor in the landscape. More attention was given to different views and perspectives on the same landscape. In his survey of cultural geography in The Netherlands, geographer Ben de Pater states: ‘The landscape can be “read” in different ways, and thus can be given different meanings’ (De Pater, 2003).

During the last decade the biography of landscape, as was particularly advocated by Kolen (2005), became a popular concept in Dutch historical landscape studies. The term was introduced in 1979 by the American geographer Marwyn Samuels in his essay ‘The Biography of the Landscape’.

Figure 8.3 Eerde Manor, 2008



The present house dates from the first quarter of the 18th century and was built by Johan Warner van Pallandt. The lay-out of the geometrical gardens and park date from the same period.  
Photo: Michiel Purmer

In this essay, Samuels identified 'authors' in the landscape. In his view, landscapes are not the outcome of autonomous processes and development models, but are, at least partly, the work of individuals. These 'authors' are influenced by their perception of the existing landscape. This perceptual context in which people shape the landscapes around them are called landscapes of impression. The results of the work of the authors in the spatial reality are called landscapes of expression (Samuels, 1979, 70-78; see also the introduction by Kolen and Renes and the contribution of Kolen in this volume).

In recent years, the concept of the landscape biography has been broadened and applied in different research programmes. In his PhD thesis, Kolen states that the landscape biography approach provides us with a different perspective on landscape development (Kolen, 2005, 112 ff). In the introductory chapter of this volume, five topics are presented: exchange, authorship, temporality, layeredness and inheritance. All these are relevant for the present study, but in particular the topic of authorship will be addressed here. Two main authors of the *Eerder Achterbroek*



landscape can be identified for the last century: the last private owner and *Natuurmonumenten* (itself an organization in which individuals could put their own mark on the landscape). These two authors and the relations between them will have a central position in this chapter. Other authors are the tenants and local governments. All their activities are influenced by local circumstances, particularly by the heritage values that have been attached to this landscape during the last century. We shall see whether their activities can be traced to recognizable layers in the landscape.

### **Eerde and the *Eerder Achterbroek***

The country estate of Eerde is first mentioned in the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century Eerde gained some fame as the defensible base of a robber knight who terrorized the region and the nearby cities of Zwolle and Deventer. Finally, the small castle was destroyed, and then rebuilt and destroyed again several times in the next centuries. In 1709 the estate was bought by Johan Warner van Pallandt, who had become rich as a military commander in the War of the Spanish Succession. He built the present house and commissioned gardens and park in a geometrical style (for the early history of the estate see Lamberts, 1986). The estate remained within the same family until 1982 (see figure 8.3).

The baronial Van Pallandt family enlarged the estate in the course of time. In 1913, Philip Dirk van Pallandt (1889-1979) inherited the estate from his great-nephew. During the 1930s it proved impossible for him to keep the estate intact (see below) and between 1932 and 1982 he and his heirs sold parts of the estate to various, mostly state-owned parties, hoping to protect the core of the estate from fragmentation and commercialization (Steen & Veldsink, 1948).

In 1949 *Natuurmonumenten* bought a first part of the estate, the *Eerder Achterbroek*, an agrarian landscape of around 300 hectares that was described by the baron himself as the most beautiful part of the estate (Anonymous, 1948). The name means 'the wetlands behind Eerde'. The area included nine farmhouses, each with their own enclosed arable lands and pastures. The northern part of the area consisted of former heathlands, which were for the most part reclaimed at the end of the 19th century. Already in 1949 this small-scale landscape was seen as somewhat old-fashioned (see figures 8.4a and b).



Although Van Pallandt sold parts of the estate to the municipality of Ommen and the State Forestry Commission (*Staatsbosbeheer*), *Natuurmonumenten* was the first non-governmental institution to buy a part of the estate. The '*Vereeniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten in Nederland*' (Society for the Preservation of Natural Monuments in the Netherlands) was founded in 1905 and started buying threatened nature reserves and landed estates. By 1949, the Society was an established organization that managed several important nature reserves throughout the country. With the *Eerder Achterbroek*, *Natuurmonumenten* for the first time bought an agrarian landscape, justified by the newly developed insight that such landscapes were becoming a threatened phenomenon. When trying to raise funds to buy *Eerde*, *Natuurmonumenten* printed a brochure, in which the Society stressed the importance of preservation of this 'old Saxon landscape' (Van Tienhoven & Drijver, no date).

Later, *Natuurmonumenten* would purchase other parts of the estate as well. The house, park and small hamlet of *Eerde* have been fully owned by *Natuurmonumenten* since 1982. In total, 552 hectares of the former property of the Van Pallandt family is now managed by the Society. In this chapter, however, I shall focus on the first purchase, the agrarian landscape of the *Eerder Achterbroek*.

## Research Method

Nearly 60 years later, in 2006, the first systematic historical research was carried out in the *Eerder Achterbroek*, as part of the preparations for a new management plan that aimed at restoring the historical landscape. The two historical geographers working for the Society, Sandra van Lochem and the present author, started describing and evaluating the landscape heritage of the *Eerder Achterbroek* and *Eerde*. The results were used in the restoration plan. The research started with extensive field research. Hundreds of hedges, rows of trees, woodlands and enclosed fields were surveyed. Old topographical maps and aerial photographs were used for dating the structures. Additional data came from archival research<sup>1</sup> and from interviews with former tenants and with both daughters of the last baron. The archives of *Natuurmonumenten* provided much information about the purchase of the estate in 1949 and the management until the mid-1970s. Letters and reports gave an impression of the landscape in this

1 The archival research was carried out by Hans Renes and the author.

period and the motivation for the management of *Natuurmonumenten* in the years after the purchase.

Altogether more than 300 landscape elements and structures were mapped and collected into a database (Purmer & Van Lochem, 2008). Research focused on the last 150 years and in particular on the period since 1949. The results have already been used for the restoration of the landscape. Although it is clear that many structures in this landscape have a medieval origin, due to a lack of historical and archaeological research the origins of this landscape are still unclear. Further historical and archaeological research remains a wish for the future.

## Landscape Characteristics and Landscape Change

The *Eerder Achterbroek* can be divided into two different types of landscape. The northern part consists mainly of former heathlands. Topographical maps from around 1850 show this area as a landscape dominated by heathland, with a duck decoy as the main exception. Most of the heath was reclaimed during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. This reclamation, however, was never completed and small parcels of heathland survive until the present day. During the 1930s, small-scale forestry was carried out. Still, the landscape of this part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* was relatively wide and open.

The southern part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* has a different historical background. Here medieval enclosures (in Dutch: '*kampen*') border the Bevert brook. The fields are relatively small and surrounded by hedge banks and rows of trees. The landscape is small-scale compared to the northern part.

To discover changes in the landscape, topographical maps from the period around 1900 were compared with maps and aerial photographs from the period around 1950 (the period of acquisition by *Natuurmonumenten*) and with modern maps and fieldwork data. Since 1900, the landscape has changed remarkably little. The overall structure and scale of the landscape were almost entirely preserved. This contrasts highly with the surrounding landscape, where intensive farming led to a more open and large-scale landscape.

When studied in detail, however, there were a number of interesting developments. Since 1949, the scale of the landscape in the northern part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* has become smaller, mainly by trees on the edges of the small heathland relics. At first glance, these resemble hedge banks, but in fact they developed spontaneously. The southern part, on the other

Figure 8.5 A row of oaks in the Eerder Achterbroek, 2010



The research made it clear that these rows of trees are a historic feature of this landscape, not yet identified outside Eerde.

Photo: Michiel Purmer

hand, has become slightly more open, because a number of trees have disappeared and have not been replaced.

The landscape is usually described as a typical example of the small-scale enclosed landscapes of the sandy regions of the Eastern Netherlands. This was in fact one of the main reasons for *Natuurmonumenten* to buy the area. However, fieldwork has made clear that the *Eerder Achterbroek* differs from the textbook examples of this landscape, for example by the huge number of oaks in hedgebanks and elsewhere. Some groups of oaks resemble clumps in the landscape gardens.

Other interesting features are the rows of oak trees in the southern part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* (see figure 8.5). At first glance, they appeared to be degraded hedges.<sup>2</sup> Closer inspection showed no indication that these rows were ever coppiced and these rows of trees even appeared on old topographical maps. This kind of planting is not known from other enclosed

2 This argument was used in a critical survey of the management practices of *Natuurmonumenten* (Landschapswacht, 2004). This report collected examples of neglect of historic landscapes. In this particular case, however, the report oversimplified. Careful research proved the rows of trees at Eerde to be a historic feature instead of a badly managed hedge bank.

landscapes in the Netherlands. More research is needed to explain these differences, but there are indications that the last baron may be responsible for some of the typical aspects of the area.

Even though the landscape was well preserved by the last two owners, developments did take place. As agriculture was – and is – the economic basis of the estate, the farmers had to adapt to survive. Much correspondence in the *Natuurmonumenten* archive is related to the tenants, who had to work in a historical landscape with all its limitations.<sup>3</sup> Already in 1949 the Eerder Achterbroek was old-fashioned in its farming and this became more problematic in the course of time. In 1957, nine active farms existed and a number of neighbouring farms rented land within the estate: altogether 35 tenants were active. Nowadays, only two farms remain and manage most of the area: one 'mainstream' farmer and one organic farmer, with the last one also actively developing care farm activities.

## The Baron and His Landscape

Some of the letters in the archives shed some light on the motives of Philip Dirk van Pallandt. In one letter, he expresses the wish to 'preserve the terrain in its present state' (Anonymous, 1948). Philip Dirk van Pallandt was an idealistic man. He was interested in nature and landscape design, according to an interview published in a small booklet about the Eerde estate (Ludgard & Alma, 1950). He was a board member of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds (*Nederlandse Vogelbescherming*) and *Natuurmonumenten* already long before he sold parts of the Eerde estate. As an estate owner, he wanted his estate to be enjoyed by the public as much as possible. Most of all, he wanted to keep the beauty of his estate intact. The financial burden of the inheritance forced him to sell parts of his estate, always however under strong conditions and only to governmental or non-profit organizations. He also donated parts of the estate to scouting groups. Himself a member of the Theosophical Society, in 1921 Van Pallandt offered the estate to Krishnamurti and Eerde became the headquarters of the Order of the Star in the East and the scene of the so-called Star Camps

3 Sometimes tenants complain about the loss of income caused by the influence of the wooded banks surrounding the fields. See for instance the letter about this subject by inspector J. van Soest, employed by *Natuurmonumenten* (Van Soest, 1961). More common, however, are requests for conversions of the farmhouses. *Natuurmonumenten* reacts conservatively and strives to keep the buildings as authentic as possible. See for example the letter by *Natuurmonumenten* to the province of Overijssel (*Natuurmonumenten*, 1953).



in the following years. After Krishnamurti eliminated the Order in 1929, the estate was returned to Van Pallandt, who reluctantly accepted. By then the estate was mortgaged and was subject to capital transfer taxes. Part of the estate had to be sold for this reason (Van Eeten *et al.*, 2009). However, the baron succeeded in keeping the core of the Eerde estate intact for another two decades.

In 1949, to safeguard the future of the estate, Van Pallandt decided to offer part of it to *Natuurmonumenten*, an organization he had served as a board member for thirty years. Correspondence surrounding the possible purchase of the estate shows that *Natuurmonumenten* was well aware of the significance of the area. The values were not botanical but, as described by the ecologist Victor Westhoff, scientific staff member of *Natuurmonumenten*: ‘The aesthetic and scientific significance of the area is almost entirely determined by the cultural landscape with its hedge banks’ (Westhoff, 1948). In a leaflet *Natuurmonumenten* issued to receive extra funding from its members, it describes as the main reason for the purchase the preservation of an example of one of those historical cultural landscapes that were threatened at that time in the Netherlands by land consolidation and, in general, by modern agriculture (see figure 8.6; Van Tienhoven & Drijver, no date). The leaflet stresses the aesthetic beauty of the landscape.

Figure 8.6 Brochure, titled: “Our future property”, 1949



The brochure was used to raise money in order to purchase the Eerder Achterbroek, stating the importance of the property as an example of an old cultural landscape.

Source: Collection Library Natuurmonumenten, 's-Graveland

**Figure 8.7** Oral history: interview with former tenants Seine Nevenzel and Jan Zandman of the Eerde estate, 2007



Interviews took place on location. This encouraged the former tenants to reflect on the changes in the landscape since their childhood in the 1950s.

Photo: Michiel Purmer

After acquiring the *Eerder Achterbroek*, *Natuurmonumenten* continued the conservative management of Van Pallandt. The archives hold significant correspondence about the preservation or, more appropriately, consolidation of the 1949 situation. The farmhouses were kept intact as much as possible, especially their external appearance. Permission to rebuild was always accompanied by strict conditions. When the municipality of Ommen wanted to pave a road in the *Eerder Achterbroek*, *Natuurmonumenten* wrote a petition stating: 'our society highly values the preservation of the character of the *Eerder Achterbroek* as an old-Saxon cultural landscape and has grave objections against pavement of the road, which will damage the character of the landscape'.<sup>4</sup> The road is still unpaved today.

Oral history gave additional information about the management of the *Eerder Achterbroek* in the later days of Van Pallandt and the early years of

4 Letter H.P. Gorter to the municipal council of Ommen (Gorter, 1963), about the remarks by *Natuurmonumenten* on the development scheme of Ommen.



*Natuurmonumenten* (see figure 8.7). Interviews with two tenants and the two daughters of Philip Dirk van Pallandt, all well into their seventies, made clear that the countless oaks in the Eerder Achterbroek for instance can at least partially be explained by the baron's love for these trees: they were deliberately spared when hedges were cut (Purmer & Van Lochem, 2008).

The daughters of the baron provided many examples of the direct influence of Van Pallandt on the landscape. He created vistas around the house and introduced exotic plant species such as American blueberry. According to one of his daughters, he bought several baskets with blueberries after tasting them in a delicatessen store.<sup>5</sup> He planted them in various locations on the estate to find the best possible conditions and, after finding a good location, he made a small plantation which he decorated by planting rhododendrons and azaleas. The blueberries of Eerde were quite famous and attracted many visitors in the picking season.

Again according to one of his daughters, he could take action on individual trees. It all affirms his personal involvement in the landscape of his estate. Therefore, it seems more than likely that he influenced the management of the new owner *Natuurmonumenten* either directly or indirectly. Proof of direct influence however has not yet been found. His daughter could not remember any regular contact between *Natuurmonumenten* and Van Pallandt after the purchase of the *Eerder Achterbroek* in 1949. However, it must have occupied the baron, who continued to live on the estate.

### The Authors of the *Eerder Achterbroek*

Early authors of this landscape were anonymous medieval farmers and only slightly better-known inhabitants of the medieval castle. For the manor house and gardens, the first Van Pallandt, who commissioned both during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, can easily be identified as author. For the agrarian landscape in the *Eerder Achterbroek*, however, his influence is less clear.

For most of the 20th century, the agrarian landscape was managed by two owners who, although they consolidated rather than developed the estate, still put such a mark on the landscape that they can be seen as authors.

Philip Dirk van Pallandt's conservationist and idealistic views had very practical influences on the management of the estate. Sometimes large-scale, sometimes small-scale, the baron's ideas shaped the centuries-old landscape of his estate without causing a real caesura in the development.

5 Interview with Mrs. Oudshoorn baroness Van Pallandt van Eerde, 27th of January 2011.

Not only the manor house and gardens were mainly kept intact, also in the *Eerder Achterbroek* only minor changes in scale and function were allowed. Conservation was a choice in itself, because the baron appreciated the landscape as it was and resisted pressure to change it for commercial touristic purposes. But more than conserving the landscape, he 'beautified' it to his own taste, making it resemble an English countryside. Contemporaries of Philip Dirk were well aware of his vision. As stated in an anonymous report: 'the whole offers according to baron Van Pallandt the impression of an English landscape with lots of timber trees and banks' (Anonymous, 1948). Some clumps of oaks as well as the abundance of oaks in the hedge banks can probably be explained by this personal vision. His preference for junberries is another example. Eerde was famous for these small trees, especially in full bloom. His daughter told us that the moment of full bloom was broadcast on Dutch national radio. Her father phoned the radio station when this moment arrived. Other influences of Philip Dirk van Pallandt on the landscape were more indirect, but no less interesting. His idealistic nature led him to open the estate for visitors for free, which was not common in the Netherlands at that time. Other country estates often charged entrance fees (see for instance ANWB, 1935). In this practical guide, the terms for admission for most of the Dutch country estates were listed. At that time, many estates were still fenced off; in Eerde, as the tenants told us, the fences were removed by Van Pallandt.

All these personal actions, however, fit into the centuries-old framework of the existing landscape. In this perspective it is interesting to realize that Philip Dirk inherited the estate unexpectedly and had only known the estate for some months before he became the new owner (Ludgard & Alma, 1950).

The second author of the *Eerder Achterbroek* landscape is the owner who succeeded Van Pallandt, *Natuurmonumenten*. With its management, the Society influenced the landscape until the present day. In the first decades after the purchase, the estate's management was strongly influenced by the ideas of Philip Dirk van Pallandt. That is no surprise, knowing the idealistic intentions of the baron and his involvement with *Natuurmonumenten* as member of the board (from 1914 till 1972; see Gorter, 1986, 200-202).

The 2006 field research showed a remarkable resemblance with the 1949 landscape as known from archival material, aerial photographs and topographical maps. It can be assumed that *Natuurmonumenten* followed the wish of Van Pallandt to 'preserve the terrain at its present state' quite literally. It is no coincidence that *Natuurmonumenten* sometimes spoke of the 'landscape reserve of Eerde' (*Natuurmonumenten*, 1975). Renes states that the management in the second half of the 20th century was mainly

Figure 8.8 Meulenhorst farmyard, 2008



Natuurmonumenten tried to keep the farmhouse and the farmyard as “authentic” as possible since the purchase of the Eerder Achterbroek in 1949.

Photo: Michiel Purmer

aesthetic (Renes, 2010). The archive contains a great deal of correspondence about retaining the landscape as it was, by careful restoration of the farmhouses, restrictions on new recreational functions and a focus on the ‘authentic’ look of the countryside (see figure 8.8).

The focus on landscape preservation makes the *Eerder Achterbroek* an exceptional property for *Natuurmonumenten*, which in the first place is an organization for the protection of natural values. In the *Eerder Achterbroek*, the botanical and ecological values are strongly determined by the historical landscape. The small-scale enclosed landscape with its abundance of hedge banks and old trees is a habitat for many bird and plant species.

Although the existing landscape strongly influenced both authors, their management aims and practices shows not only continuity but also differences. Where the last baron tried to improve and beautify the landscape he inherited, the aim of *Natuurmonumenten* was just conservation. Van Pallandt strove for a beautiful, rather than a historical landscape. Although he respected the framework of the landscape he inherited, he surely made his additions, also by introducing and promoting plants that did not originate

on the estate or even in the country. The junoberries and blueberries, but also the American oaks, are examples.<sup>6</sup>

*Natuurmonumenten*, on the other hand, strongly focused on the historical values of the landscape, combined with the views of a nature preservation organization. Some personal 'hobbies' of Van Pallandt, as for instance the blueberries and junoberries, were not continued and even actively removed.

The results of our research, including the identification of Van Pallandt as an active author of the *Eerder Achterbroek* landscape, led to ongoing discussions as to whether his influence should be seen as a layer in the historic landscape that is worthy of preservation.

Part of the influence of both authors is not in what they did, but in what they did not do. Their aesthetic and idealistic purposes spared this landscape from large-scale developments such as land consolidations and touristic development. The comment of visitors to the *Eerder Achterbroek* is often that it reminds them of landscapes that have disappeared elsewhere. Historical geographers sometimes praise the completeness of this landscape. The agrarian landscape of the *Eerder Achterbroek* may not have been very rare in 1949, but it is very rare indeed nowadays.

## Conclusions

At first sight, the *Eerder Achterbroek* is a prime example of an enclosed landscape, typical for the eastern part of the Netherlands. It was presented in this way in 1949, when it was purchased by *Natuurmonumenten*, and has been managed as such until the present day. The landscape research that took place during the past few years has made clear that the area differs from the textbook examples of this landscape type. These differences proved to be the result of the influence of two authors, baron Philip Dirk van Pallandt and, since 1949, *Natuurmonumenten*. Both wished to conserve this landscape, to slow down developments in agriculture and tourism that would threaten the characteristics of the historic landscape; at the same time, however, they have put their marks on the landscape.

In this way, the *Eerder Achterbroek* is a welcome case study to develop the concept of authorship of an agrarian landscape that has in the past been described as the work of many generations of anonymous farmers. The new

6 Interview with Mrs. Oudshoorn baroness Van Pallandt van Eerde. The junoberries were probably already present on the estate before the arrival of Philip Dirk. The American oaks (in contrast to the native oaks) and the blueberries were introduced by Philip Dirk personally.

Figure 8.9 Two dead oaks, 2008



Field inventory revealed some nearly disappeared structures in the landscape. Only these dead trees are reminiscent of this former hedge bank. The new management plan provides in a careful restoration of these structures.

Photo: Michiel Purmer

insights in the authorship of this landscape have transformed our vision of it and have led to new questions for landscape management. In particular, the influences of the last baron are now re-evaluated, which is leading to changes in management aims and practices. For example, the exotic plant species introduced by the baron, that have been unpopular among ecologists of *Natuurmonumenten*, are now seen as part of the interesting heritage of the last baron. In general, management is changing its aims from aesthetic to historic, as historic methods for cyclic management, such as coppicing, are being re-introduced (see figure 8.9). Instead of a textbook example of an east-Netherlands enclosed landscape, Eerde is now seen as a unique landscape.

Such a way of looking at the role of individuals is common practice in the study of architecture, of landed estates and also of military landscapes (see for instance Tivers, 1999; he describes a British military landscape and its characteristics). It is, however, still very rare in the study of the history and heritage of agricultural landscapes. For these agricultural landscapes this approach offers many challenges for the highly varied Dutch landscape.

In this respect, the 82 landscapes described in the large-scale landscape characterization project '*Ontgonnen verleden*' (Directie Kennis, 2010), offer an interesting chance for more biographical research.

It is a way of looking at landscape management that has repercussions on the management of other properties too, as *Natuurmonumenten* has started to realize. In particular, research into the traces of individual authors leads to new degrees of subtlety in landscape management (Purmer, 2011). It's not a coincidence that The National Trust, an organization sometimes compared to *Natuurmonumenten*, started the 'Going local' campaign in 2010, which fits in the internationally growing interest in local history and local heritage. This strategy illustrates the growing attention for the local community and the unique, distinctive features of the properties the Trust manages (National Trust, 2010).

It also brings new tensions. For example, government regulations for subsidiaries and contractors often use the textbook examples to describe, manage and subsidize landscape features. In the Netherlands, a division in eleven types of landscape is widely used in the historical geography research tradition. However, such a rather rough division allows ample space for unique characteristics and local developments.

Moreover, it leads to new questions for scientific research, as relatively little is known of local variety in historic management practices. Perhaps a role can be given to the many local history societies.

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## 9 The Quiet Authors of an Early Modern Palatial Landscape

Transformation without Reconstruction at King William's Het Loo

*Hanneke Ronnes*

### Abstract

This chapter presents a case study of Het Loo, the palace built in the Dutch province of Gelderland by stadholder William III, and extended a few years later when the prince also acquired the crown of England. This late 17th-century palatial landscape was extensively renovated in the 19th century (by Louis Napoleon Bonaparte) and in the 20th century (by Queen Wilhelmina). The initial building and the subsequent rebuilding phases – the moments of structural change – have hitherto received scholarly attention; the supposedly uneventful 18th century on the contrary has not. It is the aim of this chapter to demonstrate, by means of the biographical approach, that a change of the palatial landscape also occurred during the 18th century, albeit not structurally. Both natural processes (the steady growth of the trees in the garden, a harsh winter) and individual authors (the little known protagonists who inhabited or administered the allegedly 'frozen' palace site) were involved in the transformation of the site. The other 'quiet authors' distinguished here are the contemporary visitors to the palace who recorded what they saw and whose travel diaries, letters and autobiographies are the historical sources which enable a recounting of a somewhat forgotten era of Het Loo.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, Palace Het Loo, authorship, landscape layers, William III, memory

### Introduction

Academic research into elite architecture focuses mainly on the first building phase and, to a lesser extent, on later building campaigns; not on the much longer periods in between when the houses were actually lived

Figure 9.1 Early 18th-century birds-eye view of Het Loo



Exemplary to many later birds-eye views. Engraving by Romeyn de Hooghe (1645-1708). 'Naar eene kopergravure van Romijn de Hooghe vervaardigd in het laatst der 17e eeuw' (Jongsmā, 1912-22)

in. Moreover, in such studies the research method or perspective used is predominantly that of art (or architectural) history; a cultural-historical approach is rare.

In addition to a focus on moments of construction, scholars usually pay much attention – especially in recent decades – to elite architecture as a symbol or an instrument of power. 'Legitimization and the promotion of fame among contemporaries and for posterity' is considered 'the most important function of royal architectural activity' (De Jong, 2000, p. 42). And even though there is certainly truth in the argument that castles, country houses and urban palaces served as instruments and centres of power and distinction, I believe this begs for nuance as well as for alternative parameters.

It is also true for the palatial landscape of Het Loo that especially the moment of construction – explained as an act of power – has hitherto received scholarly attention. This was the time that king-stadholder William of Orange (William III) 'following the example of all eminent personalities',

**Figure 9.2** Present-day facade of the back of the palace

The classical garden has been restored.  
Photo Hanneke Ronnes

realized, ‘a modest memorial’ (Ten Hoorn, 1700, p. 270).<sup>1</sup> Het Loo was built in the 1680s and extended soon after when prince William III acquired the crown of England. The palatial landscape was extensively renovated in the 19th century by Louis Napoleon Bonaparte – brother of the emperor and ruler in Holland – when a landscape garden was laid out and the house was plastered white, and by Queen Wilhelmina at the turn of the 20th century when Het Loo was extended both in width and height. Apart from these building phases, the restoration of the palace and garden in the 1970s when both regained their 17th-century appearance, received scholarly attention.

In contrast, the 18th century at Het Loo is usually presented as a period during which nothing much happened, a century characterized by little more than rebuilding *plans*. This situation was largely due to the – for various reasons – allegedly powerless Orange stadholders at the time.

<sup>1</sup> Ten Hoorn, *Reis-boek door De Vereenigde Nederlandsche Provinciën*, 270. All (free) translations by the author. Original in Dutch: ‘Op het voorbeeld van alle Grootste Personagien, [realiseerde hij] een gering gedenkteeken’.

**Figure 9.3** View of “Het Oude Loo” (the old palace of Het Loo) (Andreas Schelfhout, 1787-1870)



The landscape park of the Loo which replaced the classical garden. In the center a view of Het Oude Loo.

It is argued that in the early 19th century ‘the old structure dating to stadholder William III was still virtually untouched’ (Royaards, 1972; Tromp, 1992, p. 18). Others, too, claim it was only during the reign of Louis Napoleon that the garden of William of Orange was first removed (Van der Wyck, 1976, p. 203). Some mention that the landscape garden from 1808 replaced the original 17th-century garden, including several parterres which had been adjusted to the English landscape style in the course of time (Groen & Bierens de Haan, 2008, p. 5). All in all, it is fair to say that 18th-century Het Loo has been neglected as a subject of study because little to no construction happened during this period.

However, it would be false to assume that the history of the building came to a temporary standstill, or was severed, during this period. In fact, this chapter gives prominence to the, at first sight, scarcely significant 18th-century palace. This is done by means of a ‘biography’ of the artefacts and landscape – house and park – on the basis of reports of contemporary eye witnesses whose writings fill in and colour such a biography (Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986; Samuels, 1979; Kolen, 2005). The subject of this biography is therefore not the sequence of physical

layers or subsequent building phases, but the period *after* construction, when the veneer is gone and what takes its place is not yet considered as patina. It is also the moment *before* a reconstruction phase, before a new layer is added.

This chapter offers the main stage to a period that has hitherto received little attention: the time period when what was once new had become old and old-fashioned. Ego documents in particular – diaries, travel accounts, memoirs and letters –, some of which are unique in studies about Het Loo, help to reveal how this process was played out in centres of power.

### The Early Palace

The travel journal of the lawyer Abel Eppo van Bolhuis, now in the city archives of Groningen, The Netherlands, describes a trip to Het Loo in 1693. Van Bolhuis visited the garden of the English king and Dutch stadholder, which was lined with young trees, as well as fountains, the old castle Het Loo that was incorporated into the new garden and ‘the aviary which was home to all kinds of wild birds’ (Groninger Archieven, 1693).<sup>2</sup> He also entered the new palace, which at the time was being extended, even though it had only been completed a few years earlier. Van Bolhuis noted the many mirrors in the new antechamber, which – and this is an interesting observation – enabled people ‘to observe one another both front and back’ (Groninger Archieven, 1693).<sup>3</sup> The presence of large and costly mirrors during this time period is usually interpreted as serving a practical purpose on the one hand – the reflection of candles in the mirrors lights up the room – and as a symbol of financial prowess on the other hand (see for instance Terlouw, 1988, p. 45). Bolhuis, however, speaks of the working qualities of the mirror. He refers to the mirror’s material agency, to the active role of the mirror within court culture of that time, when people were prone to watch, weigh and judge each other during ceremonial assemblies (Knappett & Malafouris, 2008).

The antechamber was the most accessible room of the apartment of the king-stadholder. The chamber was much less accessible, and the cabinet still less so. The house too, thus, had ‘working’ qualities, possessed

2 GA, *Archieffamilies van Bolhuis* 493, Journaal van de reizen van Abel Eppo van Bolhuis, 1693. Original in Dutch: ‘... een rondeel ’t welke gemaect wijrde (...) daer van allerhande wilde vogels in souden wesen’.

3 Ibid. Original in Dutch: ‘... [om] malkander van voren & van achteren te kunnen sien’.



Figure 9.4 King-stadholder William III



'Koning-Stadhouder Willem III. Zwaartekunstprent van J. Smith naar G. Kneller' in: Morren, Th. (1908). *Het Huis Honselaarsdijk*. A.W. Leiden: Sijthoff's uitgevers-maatschappij. In the possession of the author

agency. The spatial organization of Het Loo created layers of distinction, as did the restrictive or free access to the different rooms. It is important to note that this was only so when the king-stadholder was present. In his absence, the rooms abruptly changed into strikingly open spaces. Bolhuis, so his travel journal suggests, had access to each and every room. In the chamber of William's apartment he admired 'a clock that could run for 14 months without needing winding'; the same clock that was mentioned by visitors until the late 18th century (Groninger Archieven, 1693).<sup>4</sup> Bolhuis also had access to the cabinets of both the king and the queen where he admired 'paintings of renowned persons' (Groninger

4 GA, *Archief families van Bolhuis* 493, *Journal van de reizen van Abel Eppo van Bolhuis*, 1693. Original in Dutch: '... een horologie dat 14 maanden sonder opwinden konde lopen'.

Archieven, 1693).<sup>5</sup> The very moment King William returned to Het Loo, the antechamber was transformed once again into the epicentre of court ceremony and the cabinet became a 'locale of personal time'. Or, as Erving Goffman would put it, the former rooms were 'front regions', the latter a 'back region'.

When considering the appreciation of Het Loo as both centre and instrument of power, one should take into account the meaning of country houses and hunting lodges in general and this one in particular. Even though business was certainly done at Het Loo, it was primarily a place that William could retreat to and find some peace and quiet. Edward Southwell, a member of William's entourage, wrote that 'his Maty, has hinderd any increase of building, that soe the Company may have noe Accommodation or inclination to stay' (Fremantle, 1970, p. 53). The travel account by Joseph Shaw, describing his long and agonizing trip to Het Loo in 1701 or 1702 across the heath of the Veluwe, partly in the pitch dark of night, reminds us that the palace at the time was a very remote place (Shaw, 1709, p. 6-9). Tessin speaks of a sixteen-hour journey from Amsterdam to Het Loo (Upmark, 1900, p. 121).

Het Loo was explicitly meant to serve as a hunting lodge. Bolhuis estimated the number of horses at Het Loo at 30; the capacity of the stables was presumed to be 90 horses by some, 100 or even 152 horses by others (Groninger Archieven, 1693; Raaij & Spies, 1988, p. 123; Fremantle, 1970, p. 52). In 1698 a young German visitor, who later became known as the historian Johann Burkhard Mencke, watched the king-stadholder leave for the hunt, William III's favourite pastime. Apparently this was not a very ceremonious affair, as Mencke jotted down in his travel journal: 'We saw the King entering the coach as he went hunting, He wore a dilapidated brown cape, to which on the left side was attached a silver star, but which seemed very old' (Wir sahen den Koenig auf die Kutsche steigen, alss er auf die Jagd fuhr. Er hatte ein schlecht braun Kleid, darauf allein an der lincken Seite ein silberner Stern gestrickt war, so aber schon sehr alt schien) (Mencke, 2005, p. 67-68).

Not only was the king-stadholder at times spoken of condescendingly; Het Loo itself was regularly described so too. An anonymous English traveller who visited Het Loo in 1699 expressed his enthusiasm about the gardens, but his praise did not concern the palace itself; he considered the interior 'rather neat than magnificent (...) we saw but little rich furniture' (Van Strien, 1998, p. 260). Coenraat Droste, who visited Het Loo one year later,

5 Ibid. Original in Dutch: 'schilderen van grote personagien'.

thought both the gardens and the house unworthy for a king (Molhuysen & Blok, 1926, p. 455). He composed a sour-sounding poem that asserted that, even though the courtiers praised Het Loo, it was by all means incomparable to Versailles (Fruin, 1879, p. 203-204).<sup>6</sup>

It would be unfair to state, however, that no attempts were made at creating a worthy and impressive palace. The garden in particular, and within it especially the cascades, was praised as much as it was criticized. Romeyn de Hooghe wrote that the building that was created in the eighties of the 17th century, when William III was stadholder and not yet king, was being extended and transformed in the nineties from 'a Princely Model into a Kingly Garden of Pleasure' (De Hooghe, 1695). This phrase was originally used as caption for the series of prints of Het Loo by Romeyn de Hooghe, yet was repeatedly used thereafter during the late 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>7</sup>

This shows the direct and measured connection that existed between good taste and distinction, and between the magnitude and splendour of a palace or country house and the owner's rung on the aristocratic ladder.<sup>8</sup>

During the construction and interior design of Het Loo many celebrated architects, including Jacob Roman and Daniel Marot, sculptors and fountain specialists, were consulted. The diary of Constantijn Huygens, Jr, William's secretary, shows that his advice too was sought during the process. Huygens noted in his diary that the king asked him to assess the architectural drawing for the main staircase designed by Daniel Marot, and that the king discussed with him 'the sculptures in the garden and the vases decorated with bas-relief' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 653; Huygens, Jr., 1876, p. 433).<sup>9</sup> Whenever the builders had completed a new part of the house or garden, Huygens went to see the results for himself, as he did in 1694 for 'the newly made aviary', the same

6 Fruin (ed.), *Overblijfsels van geheughenis der bisondere voorvallen in het leeven van den heer Coenraad Droste*, 203-204. Original in Dutch: 'Heb ik den selfden dag den Konink nog begroet, Dien ik in 't wandelen heb op Het Loo ontmoet (...) / Hoe seer dit lusthuys wierd geroemt door Hovelingen, Ik heb daer niet gesien soo Koninklyke dingen / Als in voorgaenden tyt ik tot Versaille sag: / Daer men nog Slot nog Tuyn bij vergelyken mag'.

7 Two of the many possible examples are: Shaw, *Letters to a nobleman, from a gentleman travelling thro' Holland, Flanders and France*, 10, and Tirion, *Tegenwoordige staat der vereenigde Nederlanden*, 507.

8 William of Orange himself doubted whether this extension would be an improvement. Huygens Jr., *Journaal van Constantijn Huygens*, vol. II, 39.

9 Huygens Jr., *Journaal van Constantijn Huygens*, vol. I, 433. Original in Dutch: '... [de koning sprak] van de beelden in de thuyen ende van de potten met basserelieven daer op'.

Figure 9.5 Het Loo, from the garden looking at the back of the house



Pavilions in the gardens of Paleis Het Loo, etching (J. van Call. *Admirandorum quadruplex spectaculum*, Amsterdam: P. Schenk [c. 1695])

aviary that Bolhuis had commented on a year earlier when it was still under construction (Huygens Jr., 1877, p. 349).<sup>10</sup>

Hans Willem Bentinck, William's confidant, was also actively engaged in the design of the garden and apartments (Onnekink, 2007; Drossaers & Lusingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 699).<sup>11</sup> Bentinck, who, like Huygens, owned an apartment to himself at Het Loo, which was located exactly below that of the king, reported to the latter from Paris in 1698 about what furniture best to purchase: 'Je ne trouve nullement que les lits et meubles que l'on fait ici, puissent estre au goût de V. Ma té' (Japikse, 1927, p. 246). He considered the Parisian furniture not to the king's taste: Parisian beds and upholstery – the French 'meubles' at this time refers to upholstery – were old-fashioned, since the high nobility in Paris did not buy according to the latest fashion. He

<sup>10</sup> Huygens Jr., *Journal van Constantijn Huygens, vol. II*, 349. Original in Dutch: '... de nieuw gemaecte voliere'.

<sup>11</sup> Bentinck's apartment later came into the possession of 'Milord Albemarle', Arnold Joost van Keppel. Ronnes, 'Friendship and Power', 65.

explained that in France, good manners dictated that old and costly family furniture was not to be replaced too often (Japikse, 1927, p. 246).<sup>12</sup> Bentinck's advice, to purchase the furniture in England, was followed by the king.

## Quiet Times

Although Het Loo could not count on everyone's undivided enthusiasm, the palace was without doubt one of the highlights of the Republic. It gained this status not least due to the 'visual propaganda', as Erik de Jong calls it, by means of the above-mentioned birds-eye perspectives by Romeyn de Hooghe and the lyrical description of the garden by Walter Harris, William's medical doctor (De Jong, 2000, p. 41; Harris, 1985 [1699]). Fürst Christian Eberhard von Ostfriesland, who visited Het Loo in 1704, two years after William's death, wrote in admiration: 'Es ist alles so, wie es ein Koenieg haben muss (Kaeber, 1912, p. 324).' He observed and documented many English influences, such as the 'bullengrin' (a corruption of 'bowling green') and the English furniture (Kaeber, 1912, p. 322, 324). The animals at Het Loo he considered to be exotic. Nearly half his travel journal is devoted to a description of the birds in the aviary near the old castle of Het Loo. Typical of the encyclopaedic or 'complete' collections common in the 18th century, the bird collection consisted of rare specimens such as the 'East India bird' as well as the very ordinary and local 'braun und weise Heckster' (Kaeber, 1912, p. 323).

With William's death in 1702 a time of stillness commenced. Throughout the first few decades of the 18th century, when the Low Countries was without a stadholder, Het Loo served primarily as a museum. The few people still living and working at the property attended to the well-known museological tasks of preservation, maintenance and presentation. Witness to this are the accounts by travellers of a gardener who looked after the park, and of a warden who gave tours to visitors. The house, uninhabited and without a purpose, became frozen in time. The habitus of the owner – consisting of both ceremony and personal time – was replaced with the wonder and awe of the visitor, the emotions as expressed by the Fürst von Ostfriesland.

A building inventory from 1713 mentions that some of the furniture had been moved to the 'furniture attic' and to other Orange palaces in

12 Bentinck wrote: 'Je ne trouve nullement que les lits et meubles que l'on fait ici, puissent estre au goût de V. Ma té. (...) Les lits sont (...) à la vieille mode que l'on est obligé de suivre ici et maintenir, parce que dans les grandes maisons ils ont des meubles riches de famille qui seroit hors de mode, si l'on en changeoit souvent'.

Breda, Leeuwarden and Dieren; the small apartment of Huygens, Jr. (Lord of Zuilichem) in the uppermost quarter, which consisted of a room covered with gold leather upholstery and a small cabinet, was still mostly intact. Yet the few pieces of furniture that remained, including a leather chair, a small bed lined with East Indian satin, four English chairs, a mirror with a gilded frame and a night chair, were undoubtedly covered in dust (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 655-656). Travellers noted that the largest fountain at Het Loo, which competed with the principal fountains at Versailles, had stopped working; John Farrington, who visited Het Loo in 1710, wrote: 'There are now no horses in the stable' (Farrington, 1994, p. 72, 75; Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 681). Just like the Fürst von Ostfriesland six years earlier, Farrington mentioned the menagerie and the aviary of Het Loo; but the number of animals had now seriously shrunk. He only mentioned two kinds of birds: '2 odd East India birds' and 'a fine crane'; and of the larger animals solely 'a deer from India' and 'a beast they call an eelant' seem to have been left (Farrington, 1994, p. 75). Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, who visited Het Loo around the same time as Farrington, explained: 'We heard that many [exotic animals] had

Figure 9.6 Map of the Low Countries around the time of the death of Willem III



On this map of the Low Countries, produced for the English market around the time of William the III's death, Het Loo, bottom right, represented one of the iconic or canonic, new buildings of the Low Countries, together with the Roman curiosity Brittenburg and important cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam. However, Het Loo, in the following decades, slowly but surely became an old building.



died in the cold Winter of 1708' (wir hoerten dass in dem kalten Winter 1708 Sehr viel [Fremde Tiere] gestorben seihen) (Von Uffenbach, 1753, p. 372-377).

For foreign visitors Het Loo was like a *Wunderkammer* – a cabinet of curiosity – in which the exotic took centre stage. However, for Dutch and probably for some English visitors too, the palace served as an identity museum that celebrated the well-known and familiar, a *lieux de memoire*, a place of remembrance – the very opposite of an exotic landscape. Or if we abandon for a moment the museum analogy – after all, since 1713 but especially after 1734, Het Loo received more frequent occupants in the persons of Maria Louise of Hessen Kassel, William IV and Anna of Hannover (Schutte, 1999, p. 35) – many visitors were primarily interested in the *genius loci* of Het Loo as the very place that embodied the spirit of king-stadholder William of Orange. This representative function was important to visitors, but probably just as much to William IV and later to William V.

## Legacy

In 1740, 50 years after the aforementioned Abel Eppo van Bolhuis, his son Michiel van Bolhuis visited Het Loo. Both Van Bolhuis and his companion and brother-in-law Theodorus Beckeringh kept diaries in which they recorded their solemn observation that 'the palace of this famous excellent royal garden of pleasure' was built 'at the command of the great William, King of Great Britain and stadholder of the United Provinces, to be a memorial' of the monarch (Beckeringh, 1895, p. 364; Groninger Archieven, 1740).<sup>13</sup> The palace of 'the great William the Third', as it essentially still exists today, harboured 'precious royal pieces' which people came to see, including paintings for which in one case 'King William had paid twenty-five thousand guilders' and 'the green cabinet in which Queen Mary enjoyed walking' (Groninger Archieven, 1740).<sup>14</sup> Antonio Monsanto, a

13 Original in Dutch: '... het palais van deze beroemde uitnemende vorstelijke Lustplaats [was gebouwd] op het bevel van den grooten William, Koning van Groot-Britanniën en Stadhouder dezer Vereenigde Nederlanden, tot een gedenkteken van zijne ruime gedagten en verlustigende uitspanningen'. It is not unlikely, considering the fact that both men wrote down the same sentence, that Van Bolhuis and Beckeringh cited a travel guide or information provided to visitors. Beckeringh, 'Journal of dagverhaal van een plaisir reisje, van Groningen na Kleef', 364; GA, *Archieffamilies van Bolhuis* 493, Journaal door M. van Bolhuis van een reis naar Kleef, 1740.

14 Original in Dutch: '[De lustplaats van] den groten Willem den Derden', 'als het nog hendaags bijna gezien wort', herbergde 'kostelijke koninglyke huissieraden' die men kwam bekijken, waaronder schilderijen waarvoor in een geval 'Koning Willem, vijf en twintig duizent gulden betaalt hadde' en 'het groen Kabinet van de Koninginne Mary die haar daar in gedurig



British linguist, wrote of 'the Bed of King William the III<sup>d</sup>, finely emboider'd by the Hands of Queen Mary' (Monsanto, 1752, p. 24). In the 18th century, different Orange-owners of Het Loo succeeded each other; nevertheless, the palace during this time still belonged to and was associated with the former king-stadholder William III.

Before his death in 1711, Johan Willem Friso van Nassau visited Het Loo only sporadically. This was mostly due to the conflict about the inheritance that had ensued after the death of William III between the Frisian cousin and William's relatives in Prussia, a struggle that reached its final decision only in 1732 (Schutte, 1979, p. 192; Bruggeman, 2005, p. 164). This same conflict was responsible for the fact that all the furniture at Het Loo was temporarily sealed in 1702 (Nusselder, 1985-1993, p. 10). Nine years later, in 1711, Johan Willem Friso's widow, Maria Louise, and her daughter Amalia and her young son Willem Karel Hendrik Friso, who later became stadholder William IV, and who was born shortly after the death of his father, were given permission to make use of Het Loo (most other houses were given in temporary custody to Frederik I, king of Prussia). However, it appears unlikely that they made frequent use of this offer (Bruggeman, 2005, p. 167).

At the time of the marriage of William IV with Anna of Hannover in 1734, the interior of Het Loo was still virtually identical to that of the time of William III. In 1713, the house was somewhat stripped down as far as the collection of paintings was concerned, because Marie Louise sold a good number of them to Queen Anne (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 695). At some time between 1713 and 1734 the house was emptied a little more. This is evident when comparing two probate inventories from those years. The first inventory dating from 1713, for instance, states that a corridor near one of the royal cabinets was hung with gold leather and a map of Turkey; in 1734 this map is no longer mentioned (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 603, 649). Several dilapidated pieces of furniture were also replaced during this time. It must have been during those same years that the new dining room was fitted with '16 yellow French chairs' while the old 'table chairs and mattresses were stored in the furniture attic because they were no longer usable' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 619).<sup>15</sup> It is rather striking that, thirty years after the death of

plag te vermaken met wandelen'. GA, *Archieffamilies van Bolhuis* 493, Journaal door M. van Bolhuis van een reis naar Kleef, 1740.

<sup>15</sup> In 1713 the attic contained considerably more pieces of furniture than in 1734 – 80 mattresses in 1713 as against 20 in 1734, etc. – which means that either the furniture was used again after 1713 or was thrown away. Original in Dutch: In de nieuwe eetzaal zijn 'de tafelstoelen met matrassen

the king-stadholder, most apartments at Het Loo were still named after their long-gone residents. In 1734 the bedroom that had belonged to Huygens, Jr., which held nearly the exact same items as in 1713, was called 'bedroom of lord Zulichem, now lord Grovestins' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 612).

The gardens were kept, but not always well enough to keep the famous cascades operational. In 1722 an order was given for 'the delivery of several pumps, or fountain tubes' to make sure that 'the cascades at Het Loo do not come to a standstill' (Aardoom, 1996, p. 53). There are only two indications that more than the bare minimum of maintenance was done to the gardens in the years up to 1734, when William IV and Anna of Hannover started to frequent Het Loo. One concerns a drawing, probably by Christiaan Pieter van Staden and dating to 1732, of a plan for the upper garden, which, however, was never executed. The other indication is the note about a payment made to Samuel van Staden 'for laying out' several levels of the upper garden, and for 'improving the gravel paths and changing the terrace in front of the house' (Schmidt, 1999, p. 132-134).<sup>16</sup>

One can thus only conclude that, during the first three decades following the death of William III, Het Loo remained as it had been during William's life. Similarly, during the years that William IV and Anna of Hannover resided at Het Loo, very few changes appear to have been made (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 601). This despite the 'flaring interest in architecture' that Freek Schmidt attributes to William IV after the latter's elevation as stadholder in 1747 (Schmidt, 2006, p. 71). A design for the garden of Het Loo, made by Pieter de Swart during this period, shows this surge of interest in architecture (Schmidt, 1999, p. 132-135). This design adjusted the iconographic programme of the garden of William III, that perhaps referred too explicitly to the former owner. Het Loo was meant to become a more intimate 'maison de plaisance' (Schmidt, 1999, p. 135; De Jong, 2000). The fact that new building plans were made can also be deduced, even if the references are less concrete, from a report of a political assembly, the *Gelderse landdag*, which convened in 1750 in the town of Zutphen, and which was the first such event attended by William IV in his new position of hereditary stadholder. Two of the most distinguished gentlemen, members of the higher nobility, offered him a 'welcome-gift', a considerable sum of money, as William III in his days too had been handed.

wegens onbruikbaarheid op de meubelsolder gestelt en aen die plaats [zijn] 16 geele Fransse stoelen' gezet.

<sup>16</sup> Original in Dutch: Een betaling 'voor het opmaken' van een aantal vlakken van de boventuin, 'het verbeteren van de griend paeden en het veranderen van het terras voor 't Huijs'.

Figure 9.7 The Venus fountain of Het Loo



Visitors admiring the Venus fountain at Het Loo. 'De Venusfontein in de grote tuin van Paleis Het Loo', etching, J. van Call. *Admirandorum quadruplex spectaculum*. Amsterdam: P. Schenk, [c. 1695]. From the collection of the Rijksmuseum

The stadholder humbly accepted the gift, and communicated that he would use the money 'to enlarge Het Loo' (*Nederlandsch gedenboek*, 1750, p. 273).<sup>17</sup>

It seems plausible to attribute the fact that none of the building plans materialized to the early death of William IV in 1751, just four years after his elevation to hereditary stadholder. This, nevertheless, is speculation – it was not in itself exceptional that plans were left unexecuted – and it is clear that, even without the suggested alterations, Het Loo for William IV served as a retreat, far away from the bustle of The Hague, rather than as an instrument of power. Gijsbert Jan van Hardenbroek, a state official who kept a diary, recorded in 1749: 'All goes awry; since the prince has been absent [from The Hague] at Het Loo for six weeks now' (Van Hardenbroek,

17 It is said in the report that William IV received 100,000 guilders. It is very well possible that the stadholder had entirely different plans with the money and that the allocation of the money Het Loo just meant to gratify the administrators of the province in which Het Loo was situated; then again, it is known that William IV was fond of Het Loo and was preparing plans for it.

1901-1903, p. 47).<sup>18</sup> The intimate character of Het Loo had come to prevail over its ceremonial, public function. This is not to say that audiences were no longer part of court life, but some sources do suggest that such official visits were quietly discouraged. Jacob Grothe set out for Het Loo in 1750 in an attempt to arrange a promotion for his son who was in the military. He later wrote to his son that he was told that the stadholder 'did not receive people', but 'during my considerable wait I observed that some three or four times visitors were admitted and after that I too was allowed to enter' (Het Utrechts Archief, 1750).<sup>19</sup> It appears that the stadholder preferred to spend his time and entertain himself with the usual recreational distractions at Het Loo, such as the oft-mentioned concerts. Sacheverell Stevens wrote in 1756: 'In the late prince's [Willem IV] time there was generally a concert in an afternoon, at which the nobility and gentry, with the rest of the court, were usually present' (Stevens, 1756, p. 386). Arnout Vosmaer, collector of naturalia and the director of the menagerie of Het Loo, described some more rare diversions. He stated that the very first moose indigenous to the Cape of Good Hope on display in Europe were found at Het Loo. 'Being the same size as our usual cow animals' and 'benign in all respects', the male moose had been taught 'to pull the carriage at an extraordinary fast pace, even faster than a horse, which was tried all too often' (Vosmaer, 1804, p. 5-6).<sup>20</sup>

## Aged Abode

When he was a small child, William V stayed at Het Loo every so often, but after his mother had passed away in 1759 no trips to Gelderland occurred for several years. In 1762, Van Hardenbroek wrote that 'the young prince was overjoyed about his trip to Het Loo, Dieren and Soestdijk', something he had longed for, and asked for, for several years (Van Hardenbroek, 1901-1903, p. 244).<sup>21</sup> After the early death of both William IV and Anna of Hannover, another period followed during which no royals resided at Het Loo, and house and park were left largely unaltered. The visits to Het Loo by curious

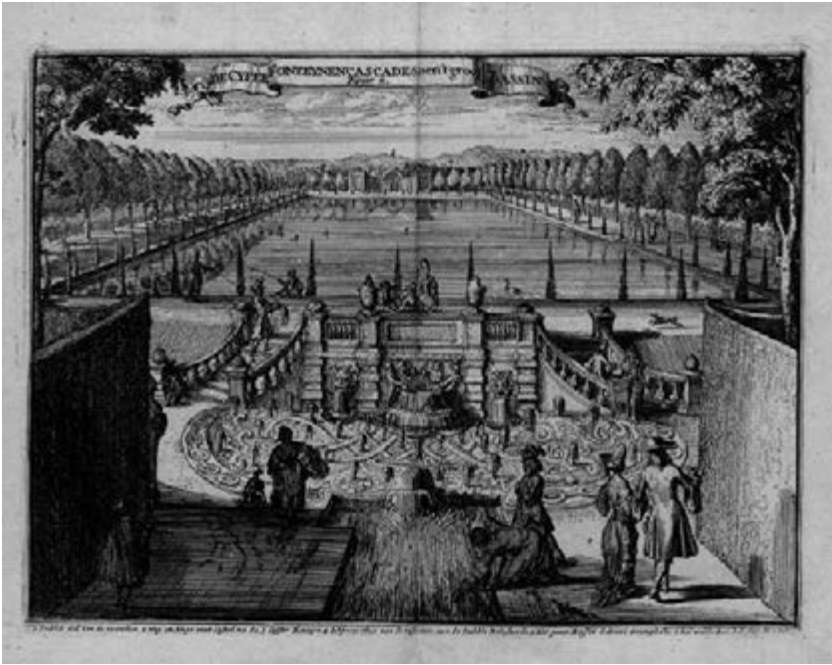
18 Original in Dutch: 'Alles loopt, als men segt, in 't wilt; de prins ses weecken absent op 't Loo'.

19 Original in Dutch: 'Geruime tijd waghende vernam ik, dat wel drie vier malen de een en de andere wiert binnen gelaten waer na het ook mijn beurte wiert'.

20 Original in Dutch: 'Hebbende de groote van onze gewoone Koe-Beesten' en 'in allen opzichte goedäärtig', had men het mannetje geleerd 'ongemeen hard voor de Chais [te] loopen, en zelfs harder dan een Paard, waar van de proef (...) maar alteveel genomen is'.

21 Original in Dutch: Hij schreef dat 'de jonge prins in groote vreugd soude wesen wegens sijn reysje na Loo, Dieren en Soestdijk'.

**Figure 9.8** The cascade with the royal monogram in front of the ‘great lake’



At first, both Mary’s and William’s monogram were shown, after Mary’s death only that of William remained. The various engravings by Romeyn de Hooghe of Het Loo, of which this is one, were reprinted in 1786 in response to the interest in the palace following prince William the V’s stay there after his departure from The Hague.

Engraving by Romeyn de Hooghe. ‘De cyfer fonteynen cascades aen ’t groot bassin’. (Anonymous, 1786)

passers-by and tourists did, however, continue. Most came to see the 17th-century park. The young Anna Maria de Neufville from Amsterdam visited the garden in the summer of 1763 as part of a trip to Gelderland. She wrote that she was unexpectedly given a shower at WR (William Rex), the hidden fountain in the shape of King William’s monogram that was apparently still, or again, working (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1763).

It is interesting that, in contrast to most visitors, the young woman not only mentioned the garden but also several rooms of the palace – she probably made these notes after her visit, trusting her memory that let her down where the colour schemes of some of the rooms were concerned. Remarkably, she does not comment on the old age of the furniture. On the contrary, she was clearly impressed by the picture gallery which held costly pieces such as a Gerard Dou for which someone allegedly had offered as

much as 16.000 guilders, and the cabinet of Queen Mary which held a 'bed embroidered by herself' (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1763).<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Anna Maria de Neufville chose to close her eyes to the outmoded state of the furniture because of their royal stature, or perhaps most of the dilapidated pieces had since been removed. The inventory that was listed in 1757, six years before the visit of De Neufville, leaves no room for doubt: the furniture was 'old, decayed and broken'; in the 'bedroom of his highness' the upholstery of the *tour de lit* and all the chairs was threadbare for the most part; and the two walnut tables in the big hall were 'very old and worm-eaten' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 602, 603).<sup>23</sup>

Around 1700 Shaw had written: 'Tis all new-built after the Modern Architecture' (Shaw, 1709, p. 10). But the ageing process that followed in subsequent decades is easy to trace. Successive inventories speak of 'new tapestries' (1713); then, without an adjective, 'tapestries' (1734); and another thirty years later the furniture was simply labelled 'old' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 602, 648). In 1753, the garden was described as 'very dilapidated and old-fashioned' (Aardoom, 1996, p. 63).<sup>24</sup> Gerrit Ravenschot, who during those years was involved with the maintenance activities at Het Loo, was said to be 'terribly busy' (Aardoom, 1996, p. 60).<sup>25</sup> In 1766, the year that William V reached maturity, an inventory was made of the state of neglect of the garden. They were in for a shock. The cascades had subsided and the sources that were to provide the fountains with water were covered under a layer of sand and trampled on by wandering sheep (Royaards, 1972, p. 28; Van der Wyck, 1976, p. 238-239). It was decided to restore the garden, including its cascades. However, repairing the cascades proved too costly and was discontinued. Apparently, the renovation of the garden took up nearly ten years (Van der Wyck, 1976, p. 239).

Travel journals also make note of the steady decay at Het Loo. In 1693, Bolhuis mentioned that the trees in the park were still small; in 1768, the English traveller Joseph Marshall mentioned that the same 'large trees' allowed for 'shady walks' (Groninger Archieven, 1693; Marshall, 1773, p. 206). Marshall started his diary with the following observations: 'I made an excursion to see Het Loo, the famous favourite seat of King William. The whole is a vile country, all heaths and forests, and in the midst of which,

22 Original in Dutch: 'Velt ledikant door haar zelve geborduurt'.

23 Original in Dutch: '... oud, vergaen en gebrooken'; '... de slaepcamer van sijn hoogheyd'; '... seer oud en verwormeld'.

24 Original in Dutch: '... seer vervallen en uijt de ordre'.

25 Original in Dutch: Hij had 'seer veel te doen'.



stands the palace. It contains nothing, that figures much to an Englishman, who has viewed the fine buildings in his own country. The gardens are, what the Dutch most admire; but they are quite in the old stile' (Marshall, 1773, p. 205-206).

Charles Des Ridellières-Leroulx from Nantes, who visited the Republic in 1776, and also stopped at Het Loo, was scarcely more generous: 'Noch het exterieur noch het interieur zou eer bewijzen aan een Engelse of Franse heer. Er zijn weinig vertrekken en ze zijn erg eenvoudig, ja zelfs armoedig ingericht. De tuinen zijn klein en in de oude stijl.' (Ni l'extérieur ni l'intérieur ne ferait honneur à un seigneur anglais ou français. Il y a peu d'appartements et ils sont meublés très simplement, même pauvrement. Les jardins sont petits et à l'antique) (Van Strien-Chardonneau, 1992, p. 411).

What was once the novel palace of the new king-stadholder had changed into a seasoned building, home to William the III's less illustrious successors. Even though the royal palace – but certainly not the memories of the king, its former owner – gradually faded, various modest changes were made to Het Loo in the days of William V and Wilhelmina of Prussia. The aviary was demolished and replaced by Chinese tea pavilions, the territory of Het Loo was expanded and the first modest steps were taken to alter the geometrical upper garden into a landscape garden (Tromp, 1992, p. 16; Groen & Bierens de Haan, 2008, p. 18). Some new pieces of furniture were purchased for the house and two front rooms were probably given stucco ceilings during this time (Van Asbeck & Erkelens, 1976, p. 127). Contemporaries had a keen eye for these alterations, even if they were modest. In 1769 Het Loo was described as: 'a country house with a beautiful garden, initially built by William III, added to by his successors and improved by the current stadholder, which process is still ongoing' (ein Lustschloss mit einens prächtigen Garten, so von König Wilhelm den III. angefangen, von seinen Nachfolgern fortgebauet, und von dem jetzigen Erbstatthalter verbessert worden: womit man noch immer fortfahret) (Von Heinecken, 1769, p. 67).

In 1790 it was said: 'Sizable improvements have, from time to time, been made to one thing or the other, by descendants of the king, especially by the current owner Prince William V' (Kok, 1790, p. 149).<sup>26</sup> Frenchman André Thouin, who visited Het Loo in 1795 to catch sight of the two elephants, Hans and Perkai (or Parkie), who had acquired some degree of fame ever

26 Original in Dutch: 'Merkelijke verbeteringen zijn, van tijd tot tijd, aan 't een en ander, gemaakt door 's Vorsten Naazaaten, vooral door den tegenwoordigen Eigenaar Prins WILLEM DEN V'.



since their presence had enriched the menagerie in 1783, spoke of a partly symmetrical and partly picturesque garden (Thouin, 1841, p. 260). However, this much is clear: none of these changes were extensive, and such could perhaps not be expected of a man like William V who said of himself 'I am no friend of novelties', and, particularly pertinent: 'One should not move old landmarks' (Gabriëls, 1999, p. 325; Schutte, 1979, p. 210).<sup>27</sup>

## State Matters and Distractions

With the marriage of William V and Wilhelmina of Prussia, Het Loo could count on summer guests once again. More than that, during the period of exile from The Hague the stadholder's family and its court resided at Het Loo permanently. What role did the aged house play in the life – 'front region' and 'back region' – at Het Loo? Several well-known, but especially some unknown sources, ego documents in particular, provide answers. The letters that Jean Malherbe, violinist in the royal court orchestra, wrote to his wife testify to the regular presence of the orchestra at Het Loo, which played its concerts in the chapel and in 'Queen Mary's long gallery' (Drossaers & Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1974-1976, p. 605; Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1763; Malherbe & Van Steensel, 1994, p. 98). The diary of Van Heiden Reinestein, who as chamberlain occupied a high rank within the stadholder's court, bears witness to various theatre productions in which he himself performed alongside the prince, princess and their children, and to rather different diversions such as a water contest held on William the III's wide pond – the pond that in the 17th century was referred to as 'one of the greatest beauties of the garden' (Fremantle, 1970, p. 52) – during which a giant castle floating on the water was set on fire, as well as a birthday breakfast inside the 'Willemstempel' [William's temple], one of the 17th-century additions to the park (Van der Meer, 2007, p. 93, 142).

Although Het Loo clearly served as a retreat, William V, like his predecessor, carried out state affairs at the palace. The prince appears to have been somewhat disappointed with the leisure he enjoyed at Het Loo. Van Hardenbroek noted in 1769 that the stadholder 'was very reclusive' and 'daily spent at least three hours in his cabinet' writing to Van Brunswijk-Wolfenbuttel

27 Original in Dutch: 'Ik ben geen vrind van nieuwigheden', 'men moet de oude Paelen niet versetten'.

Figure 9.9 Het Loo in the second half of the 18th century



'Gezicht op Paleis Het Loo, gezien vanuit het zuiden. Etching by Frederik Willem Greebe, after a drawing of F.J. Walther (1760).

From the collection of the Rijksmuseum

(Van Hardenbroek, 1901-1903, p. 322).<sup>28</sup> Years later the prince supposedly said that 'he was unable to work more in the country than in the city because time saved on fewer visitors to attend to was wasted by more letters to be written' (Van Hardenbroek, 1901-1903, p. 156).<sup>29</sup> He added that he was interested 'neither in the chase nor in planting' – something that has been contradicted by other sources (Van Everdingen, 1984, p. 114-115) – and that etiquette demanded that 'wherever he went his court went', and that this meant that at Het Loo too 'he was subject to all the inconveniences suffered in the city, and thus going for walks was the only diversion or indulgence' (Van Everdingen, 1984, p. 114-115).<sup>30</sup>

28 Original in Dutch: De stadhouder die 'seer gecacheert was' en 'dagelijks wel een uur of drie in zijn cabinet' verbleef.

29 Original in Dutch: Het bleek dat de prins 'niet veel meerder konde werken buiten als binnen, want datgene, wat door mindere audientien tijt bespaerde, wederom door de meerdere brieven (...) wierde verspilt'.

30 Original in Dutch: '... [dat waar hij] sig bevond, overal zijn hof bij sig moeste hebben, dat etiquette vereijtschte, dus buiten ook al aan gênes was onderworpen evenals in de stat, en versulks de wandeling (...) de enige dissipatie of uitspanning was'.

Letters written by the family of the stadholder bear witness to frequent walks through the palatial park and its surroundings.<sup>31</sup> They were not the only people who wandered in the park and the wider environs of Het Loo. In 1788, Malherbe wrote that he exercised his sore legs ‘in the heath surrounding Het Loo’ (Malherbe & Van Steensel, 1994, p. 100); a few years earlier in 1783, the young Claude Crommelin visited Het Loo with ‘Daddy and Mummy and Miss Gordon’ and ‘walked’ and ‘strolled’ for as many as four mornings and afternoons through the ‘gardens & forests’ and through ‘lanes & flower beds (...) hearing & seeing waterfalls & fountains on all sides’ (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1783).<sup>32</sup>

Hendrik van Raan, an architect from Amsterdam – another proverbial footnote of history whose life we know about mostly from his own memoirs – described William V taking a walk in the mid-seventies of the 18th century. When Van Raan was building the church tower in Nijkerk, his brother and sister came to visit him there and ‘since I had a couple of horses, we took off on a ride to Het Loo’ (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1768, 1783-1801). That same Sunday morning, the prince was having breakfast ‘together with the princess and their children in a Chinese tent’, the above-mentioned pavilions which had replaced the aviary (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1768, 1783-1801). Van Raan wrote, possibly with a hint of exaggeration: ‘As we were walking there, the prince with his family and court joined us and asked who we were. The young prince and princess, three years old, kissed us ... and I told them I was building the tower of Nijkerk’, which provoked an enthusiastic response from the stadholder, who was familiar with this undertaking and asked to be sent the drawings (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1768, 1783-1801).<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to the disdainful foreigners Marshall and Leroulx, the Dutchman Robertus Distelbloem was not troubled in the least by an outdated garden concept, and this not only because he looked in wonder at the scene unfolding at the afore-mentioned tea pavilions: ‘We were lucky enough to

31 To add a late example, on 30 May 1794 the future Queen Wilhelmina wrote: ‘Aujourd’hui il fait assez fait beau et j’ai promené *toute seule* pendant 2 heures au *Park*. Hier après le diner nous avons mené Mimi au *Williams Temple* et de là au *Louisenberg*’. Naber, *Correspondentie van de stadhouderlijke familie*, vol. II, 121.

32 Original in Dutch: Met ‘Papa en Mama en Mejuffrouw Gordon’ ‘gewandeld’ en ‘gekuyerd’ door Het Loo, in de ‘tuinen & bossen’ en door ‘laanen & blomperken (...) hoorende & ziende van alle kanten waatervallen & fonteinen’.

33 Original in Dutch: ‘Daar wij quame wandelen quam [de prins] met zijn huisgesin en hofstaat bij ons wandelen en vroeg wie wij waren. Het jonge prinsje en prinsesje 3 jaar kuste ons ... ik sei dat ik de toren tot nijkerk boude’.

observe Her Royal Highness from nearby, when at 10 am she came to sit down for breakfast in the garden, with a retinue of several gentlemen and ladies, and we saw her enjoy her breakfast in a pretty summer house, while next to her in a similar summerhouse, a couple of musicians on waldhorns, clarinets en basses were treating them to a pleasant sound. In between both summerhouses was a circular pond with a swan that was tossed some food by the gentlemen and ladies' (Dirks, 1857, p. 23).<sup>34</sup>

Two of the travel companions were standing at a gate along which the stadholder and his wife passed, when the former asked them 'Who are the gentlemen and where from?'. The answer was: 'Wielandt en Krak', 'laywers for the court of *Friesland*', 'upon which his noble princeliness bowed and continued his walk with Her Royal Highness through the garden and to the palace' (Dirks, 1857, p. 24). Old-fashioned or not, this was the home of the present stadholder William V, and even more significant, of the former illustrious king-stadholder: a centre of power as well as a *lieu de mémoire*.

## Conclusion

Over the last few years, the notion that time came to a standstill at Het Loo during the 18th century has been somewhat qualified, and particular emphasis is given to the late 18th-century alterations to the garden.<sup>35</sup> These changes, however, are interpreted as part of a wider narrative about subsequent building phases; the 18th-century alterations are merely seen as the harbinger of that which would grow to full stature in the 19th century. In fact, in this narrative the 18th century, in contrast to the 17th, 19th and 20th centuries, is attributed no significant role at all. Yet it is this quiet 18th century that was given centre stage in this chapter, a period during which perhaps only few changes were made to the palace building, but also a century during which Het Loo was frequently visited and regularly lived

34 Original in Dutch: 'Wij hadden het geluk Hare Kon. Hoogheid van nabij te zien, terwijl hoogstdezelve zich te 10 uur begaf naar het dejeuner in den tuin, met een gevolg van eenige heeren en dames, ziende haar in een fraai zomerhuis dejeuneren, terwijl daarnevens in een ander zomerhuis van gelijk model, eenige muzikanten op waldhorens, clarinetten en bassen aangenaam geluid maakten. Tusschen deze beide zomerhuizen was een ronde vijver en daarin eene Zwaan, die door de heeren en dames eenig eten toegeworpen wierd'.

35 This is evident from a comparison of the (in most cases already cited) literature, with on the one hand the more recent studies on the subject by Schmidt, Tromp, Groen en Bierens de Haan, and on the other hand the older works by Royaards, Van Wyck, and Hekker ('De Nederlandse bouwkunst in het begin van de negentiende eeuw', 18) and Van Agt ('De buitenplaats Beeckesteyn bij Velzen', 177).

in. How did the occupants and visitors of that time handle and interpret the legacy of the slowly ageing home of William III?

Het Loo as 'the famous favourite seat of King William' was a phrase endlessly repeated during the 18th century. For the Orange family members who occupied Het Loo after William III, this status first and foremost served to legitimize their power. When William V left The Hague in 1784 and installed himself at Het Loo, which meant a perceptible increase in visitors, the 17th-century prints by Romeyn de Hooghe were published anew. The text that accompanied this new edition emphasized that Het Loo was virtually unchanged and that William V owned and inhabited a palace that was the heritage of king-stadholder William III (Ter Molen, 2007, p. 81-82). This emphasis on the king-stadholder, and on the perceptible continuity of Het Loo rather than on the additions and changes made to the palace – which, as shown, were certainly acknowledged by contemporaries – is probably best explained by the purpose these prints were to serve as promotion of the Oranges at a time when William V was experiencing tough times.

For the princes and their families who resided at Het Loo after William III, this persistent association of the house and its gardens with the former owner meant that, for the glorification of their own personalities, they had to turn elsewhere and build their own monuments. There is sufficient proof that Johan Willem Friso, William IV and William V heeded this message and consequently made attempts at creating architecture in The Hague that was 'stadholder-worthy'.

Het Loo – just like the mirrors in the antechamber observed by Bolhuis – possessed 'material agency' as an instrument of distinction; however, the palace also possessed agency as a *lieu de mémoire*. Note, however, that taste and memory are often at odds. Foreign visitors frequently spoke disdainfully of Het Loo, emphasizing the predominantly old-fashioned character of the house and garden. They commented first and foremost on the architectural style and taste, and were less concerned with the symbolic value of the legacy of king-stadholder William III. Importantly, Het Loo was a memorial site not only for its visitors but also, undoubtedly, for its residents. Collective and personal memories overlapped. For the owners, Het Loo was a *theatrum politicum* and a 'front region', but at the same time a 'back region' and a 'locale' of personal memories. Could it be true that both these meanings of the house, instead of only the former, played a part when choices were made about renovations to the house and garden? William V's sister wrote tenderly about 'the palace of her childhood'; Louise, the young princess on the arm of the Amsterdam architect Van Raan, as an adult reminisced about 'le cher Loo', as did her mother Wilhelmina of Prussia (Naber I, 1931,

**Figure 9.10** Het Loo (now plastered) in the 19th century

'Gezicht op Paleis het Loo', etching by Frederik Christiaan Bierweiler, after a drawing by Cornelis de Kruyff (1793-1831).

From the collection of the Rijksmuseum

p. 82, 156). William V, who in his childhood had often spent time at Het Loo, begged for a trip there when he was an adolescent, and again, years later, expressed his wish to spend a summer at Het Loo after three years without an opportunity to go there (Naber II, 1931, p. 120). In the 19th century, King William I, son of stadholder William V, sent a letter to his mother in which he mentioned the landscape garden created whilst Louis Napoleon lived at Het Loo: 'As far as the gardens are concerned, these have been completely destroyed; remembering what they used to be like, it is impossible to console oneself with the present situation' (Van Asbeck & Erkelens, 1976, p. 128).<sup>36</sup> A century later Queen Wilhelmina chronicled the changes made to the house in the course of her life: 'How I sometimes long for the old proportions and

<sup>36</sup> Original in Dutch: 'Wat de tuinen aangaat, deze zijn totaal bedorven, en als men de herinnering heeft aan de vroegere, is het onmogelijk zich te troosten met de huidige toestand'.

lay-out of the building, the way it was during my youth' (Royaards, 1972, p. 13).<sup>37</sup>

Where a hiatus is often presumed in the building history, or periods of inactivity, where the various building phases of the house and the gardens of Het Loo are taken as a *pars pro toto* for the *complete* history of this landscape, where the palimpsest supposedly does not include traces of the 18th century, the quiet authors of diaries, memoires, letters and travel accounts instead show us that in the 18th century Het Loo, not less than in other periods, was part of physical and mental landscapes. Even though this century was devoid of building campaigns, the epoch should equally be considered as a time when the landscape existed, changed and grew older. This is true of course not only for Het Loo. Unfortunately, up until now the perceptions of both residents and visitors, as well as the use they made of architectural structures, has scarcely been a subject of study in traditional architectural history, which as a discipline still carries the legacy of a focus on the big names and the art-historical canon in general.

## About the Author

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37 Original in Dutch: 'Wat kan ik soms naar de oude verhouding in de afmetingen van het gebouw en de indeling, zoals die in de tijd van mijn jeugd was, terugverlangen'.



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## 10 Piet Mondrian's *Victory Boogie Woogie*, 1942-44

The Painting as Illustration of the Biography of Landscape

*Jürgen Stoye*

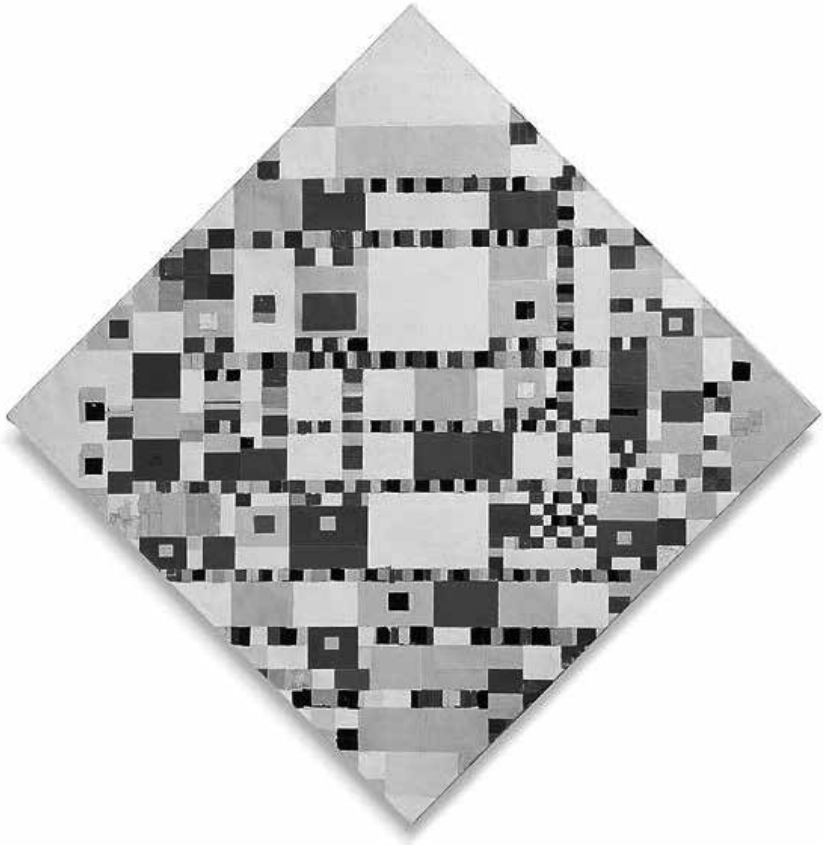
### **Abstract**

This chapter investigates Mondrian's last painting as authored landscape and the role of Piet Mondrian (Dutch: Piet Mondriaan) as 'author' of New York. Based on his desire to become a great and well-known painter, from 1905 onwards Mondrian tried to express himself in the most fashionable art styles of his time. But when staying in the Dutch village of Laren during the First World War, Mondrian started to develop a very personal style. Besides painting, dancing was his passion, which at the period earned him the title 'Dancing Madonna'. After the First World War, when going back to Paris, he became aware that his style of painting was much more radical than that of all other painters. But although or because he was the most modern painter of his time, Mondrian was lonesome, without money and without success. He withdrew from the outer world and turned his studio into a world apart, one that looked like a three-dimensional version of his reduced paintings. The only sign from the outer world was jazz. Mondrian loved to dance around his studio to jazz music he played on his gramophone – alone. Mondrian's life changed when from the mid-twenties on, the American artist and Maecenas Katherine S. Dreier became interested to buy his paintings. The moment Mondrian became a successful painter, his austere style began to change as well; it changed dramatically when he moved to New York in 1940, to escape war. Here the ascetic monk turned out to be a lounge lizard. He loved the city as he loved its rhythm – 'Boogie Woogie'.

In terms of the biography of landscape, 'Victory Boogie Woogie' can be seen as testimony of the influence which New York had on Mondrian. It illustrates the relationship between mental and material worlds. Mondrian's life and his affection for music are mirrored in this painting. As a painter, Mondrian becomes author of New York.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, New York, Mondrian, authored landscape, authorship, dwelling perspective

Figure 10.1 Piet Mondrian: Victory Boogie Woogie



You should be able to make Piet a bit more comprehensible.  
 'I don't believe that Mondrian ever can be done justice,' said Paul...  
 She immediately picked it up and said: 'If you don't try, you will resign  
 in advance.'  
 And then, in one breath: 'How do you prefer to see Mondrian yourself?'  
 He slowly said: 'As a dear fool who used to dance the Charleston.'<sup>38</sup>  
 (Dendermonde, 1994, p. 138)

38 'U moet Piet toch een stuk begrijpelijker kunnen maken.'  
 'Ik geloof niet dat Mondriaan ooit volledig recht kan worden gedaan,' zei Paul ...  
 Ze ging er dadelijk op in en zei: 'Als je het niet probeert geef je het bij voorbaat al op.'  
 En toen, in één adem door: 'Hoe ziet u Piet Mondrian eigenlijk het liefst?'  
 Hij zei langzaam: 'Als een dierbare gek die de charleston danste.'

## Introduction

New York is a city of extreme dimension. Its rectangular pattern, its verticality and density have a strong impact on the image of the city as well on how the city is imaged and imagined. Lyonel Feininger, Georgia O'Keefe, Alfred Stieglitz, Erich Mendelsohn, to name just a few, all were impressed by it. When setting their impressions on canvas or capturing it in a photograph, almost always the same perspectives are chosen: a flight of endless streets, a view from below to the heights of the towering buildings, a view from a certain height on a collage-like cityscape, or the view from above in an attempt to get a grip on the complexity. The last three paintings by Piet Mondrian show none of these features. *New York City* (1942), *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-1943) and last but not least *Victory Boogie Woogie* (1942-1944) seem to ignore all this. Yet, there is no doubt that their titles refer to the place where they were painted: New York City.

*Victory Boogie Woogie* has a unique biography. Mondrian had just started working on it in 1942 when his gallerist Valentine Dudensieg urged him to sell it to him for \$200. In 1944, after the painter's death, the painting was sold for the then enormous amount of \$8000 to Emily and Burton Tremain for their Miller Company collection of abstract art. Dudensieg himself was able to buy a chateau in France with the proceedings. After the death of Tremain, the painting came into the hands of Victoria and Si Newhouse. In their turn, they sold it in 1998 for the again enormous amount of 80 million guilders to the Dutch foundation *Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit*. It was sensation and scandal alike: so much money paid for one single painting! On 31 August 1998 Queen Beatrix granted Mondrian's painting to the Dutch state 'as a visible memory of the period 1814-2002 during which the Dutch Central Bank was responsible for the guilder' (Locher, 2000, p. 3).<sup>39</sup> Mondrian, the one man who could live on practically nothing and very often was forced to live so, honoured as a symbol of the Dutch guilder: the irony of history.

Piet Mondrian, the man behind the painting, seems to remain invisible or at least, as so often during his life, tries to withdraw from the outside world. But are things what they seem? Does not the quadrangle of 1.26 x 1.26 metres say as much about Mondrian *in* New York City as it says about Mondrian *and* New York City? Does *Victory Boogie Woogie* reflect the influence the city had on Mondrian? Is it perhaps possible to read in it the relationship

39 "als een zichtbare herinnering aan de periode 1814 tot 2002 gedurende welke De Nederlandse Bank verantwoordelijk was voor de gulden als betaalmiddel"



between the mental and material worlds? Can this painting be seen as an illustration of the biography of the landscape?

Based on the texts of Marwyn Samuels (1979) and Michel de Certeau (1984), I will define the context of the biography of the landscape within which the painting will be investigated. Apart from this theoretical investigation, the biography of Mondrian will be an important source for my research. In this regard, his second period in Paris, following the First World War, will be important, as well as the last years that he spent in exile in New York City. The short period in between, which Mondrian spent in London, will not be discussed. The biography of Mondrian is also important because he adored music. Rhythm is one of the central themes of his abstract paintings. He was fond of jazz music and already when he lived and worked in the small Dutch village of Laren he was known as the 'Dancing Madonna' (Stap, 2011, p. 95).<sup>40</sup> It is likely that *Victory Boogie Woogie* refers to this passion as well.

## The Biography of the Landscape

Until far in the 20th century, landscape was approached mainly by its morphology. The dynamic interaction between human perception and spatial structures was hardly investigated. For a long time, landscape morphology thus remained an anonymous approach, which changed only in the 1970s. At that time, the shortcomings of the reductionist vision of this naturalistic approach became criticised. Geographers adopted the term 'Lebenswelt' from phenomenology. This focuses on the principal dialectic connection and equality of people and their life world. 'Although shaped by their environment to a certain measure, people actively contribute to their world by constantly (re)creating it within the context of their thinking and acting, doing and leaving, in short, by participating in the world with their everyday lives. Being shaped by the world and presenting to it and realising in and by means of the world take place in one dialectic movement' (Kolen, 2005, p. 13).<sup>41</sup>

The constructivist approach will be applied in the following. We will study the concept of 'authorship' with Samuels and De Certeau in order to investigate the interaction between people and landscape, in our case

40 "Dansende Madonna"

41 "Hoewel tot op zekere hoogte door hun omgeving gevormd, leveren mensen aan hun wereld een actieve bijdrage door deze voortdurend te (her)scheppen in de context van hun denken en handelen, doen en laten, kortom, door met hun alledaagse leven aan de wereld deel te nemen. Het gevormd worden door de wereld en het zich tegenwoordig stellen en realiseren in en door middel van de wereld vinden plaats in één dialectische beweging."

between Mondrian and New York. As what kind of an author does Mondrian appear against the background of these texts?

## Marwyn Samuels

Samuels, in his text, shows that for a long time, western history did not take into account the individual. As a consequence, landscape was studied without studying its inhabitants and 'authors'. Samuels mentions the shortcomings of this morphological approach: 'Yet there is something vaguely amiss here. However rational, there is something unreasonable about a human landscape lacking in inhabitants; something strangely absurd about a geography of man devoid of men' (Samuels, 1979, p. 52). Without inhabitants, Samuels cannot imagine landscape: 'The biography of landscape deals with what was and is: notably the concrete World of individuals in their contexts, a World of authored landscapes' (Samuels, 1979, p. 67). He makes a distinction between mental and material landscapes and calls them 'Landscapes of Impressions' and 'Landscapes of Expressions' respectively.

According to Samuels, 'Landscapes of Impressions' are based on the perception of landscape. The resulting ideas and images, e.g. in literature and visual arts, influence the way other individuals perceive landscape. Finally, the 'impression' becomes 'impressive'. This imaging plays an important role in the physical change of the landscape, when the 'Landscape of Expressions' comes into being. This explains the strong reciprocal influence between mental and material worlds. In a biographical approach man becomes author of the landscape. Most of these authors will remain anonymous. In their everyday lives they do not leave (m)any traces. They are what Samuels calls the 'nobody in particular'.

Looking at New York City, the 'nobody in particular' disappears behind the big names. Samuels mentions members of well-known families of New York City who become individual authors. Not only are they known as individuals; with their big factories and imperia these tycoons were decisive for the life and work of thousands of others. Samuels talks about these authors as 'elite'. They form a group of people who within society are claiming a prominent position or, as 'the elite', as one prominent person. Not only did they foster economic growth, but they also changed the appearance of the cityscape and architecture of New York City. People like Louis Sullivan as the 'father of the skyscraper' or Robert Moses, whose numerous buildings are synonymous with the city, belong to this group. 'Landscape by Moses,' Robert Caro calls it (Samuels, 1979, p. 66). According to Samuels, they are the authors of Manhattan.

## Michel de Certeau

'Walking in the City' is a complex research on 'the parallelism between linguistic and pedestrian enunciation'. In this text, Michel de Certeau looks upon New York City. Literally. He is standing on the 110th floor of the World Trade Centre, looking out over Manhattan. From here the city looks like a wave of verticals. The elevated view on the city from above makes him a 'voyeur' and transforms the city from a known world into a text, stretching out before his eyes. The liveable city becomes a readable city. The wish to (over)look a city in one glance goes back to the Middle Ages and Renaissance. From that time on, cities were depicted from (then still inaccessible) heights. The spectator looks down on the city from a divine position. This perspective is also applied in the hermeneutic images of the mnemonic cityscapes from these periods to which De Certeau refers (Yates, 1966). There, the cityscape becomes a place for storing information, an artificial memory. Manhattan seems to be its built Utopia. It is also the abstract perspective from which architects and urban planners look at cities and design them. However, their only concern is structure. The everyday lives themselves take place 'down below'.

The city can only be experienced by means of movement. 'They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wandersmänner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it' (De Certeau, 1984, p. 93). According to De Certeau, in this parallelism moving in the city functions as speech does for language: the city comes alive through movement just as language comes alive through speech. De Certeau is fascinated by the anonymous mass of people, roaming its way along the facades and the shop windows of the city. They are the authors of Manhattan, even though De Certeau does not consider it an appropriate term. The movement is ordinary and unconscious. In the end the authors cannot read the 'text' they are writing: 'The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other' (De Certeau, 1984, p. 93).

### *Victory Boogie Woogie*

*Victory Boogie Woogie* comes to mind. On a formal-aesthetic level one could draw a parallel between the text of De Certeau and the image. It looks like

a view of the city from a divine perspective, an excerpt of the city structure with its rectangular shapes. They immediately make one think of the street pattern of New York City. The black lines that are so typical for Mondrian have given way to hundreds of small coloured dots that for a large part have been glued to the canvas with colour tape. The searching is still tangible in this unfinished painting. The lines show signs of the nervous, blind movement that characterizes New York City according to De Certeau. It is as if we are looking at the blindly written text without authors and spectators.

Together with *New York City* (1942) and *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-43), *Victory Boogie Woogie* (1942-44) forms a triptych. One immediately recognizes Mondrian as author. However, it is evident that the pure style of Mondrian from the two preceding decades dissolves more and more in these paintings. The vertical and horizontal lines, cutting coloured patches or defining them, used to be black. Now these lines are coloured. In the next stage the lines dissolve into stripes of different colours. In the final stage lines and patches even mingle. The result is a vibrating, rhythmic whole. 'The more or less incidentally added colour accents soon started to spread out to a full and frivolous emancipation of colour' (Locher, 2000, p. 65).<sup>42</sup> What could be the reason for this change in Mondrian's austere style?

Samuels writes: 'Viewed in terms of individual responsibility, the created landscapes of man are much like any other product of human creativity. They have much in common with the manifold forms of human art and artifice. That is, that they are constrained by need and context, but they are also expressions of authorship' (Samuels, 1979, p. 65). In a biographical approach one could follow Samuels and investigate the triptych as 'authored landscapes' of New York; as urban landscapes, a result of the interaction between Mondrian and the city, like impressions that have become impressive. It becomes interesting to take a closer look at the biography of the painter. This should include the period in Paris from 1919 until his death in 1944 in New York, the period in which Mondrian occupied himself with neo-plasticism. Are there biographical clues explaining the change from the cool and stylized rhythms of his classical period to the vibrating rhythms of his last canvases?

42 "De min of meer terzijde toegevoegde kleurige accenten gingen zich snel uitbreiden tot een volledige en uitbundige emancipatie van kleur."

## Mondrian

Despite the international fame of his paintings, Mondrian as a person remains almost invisible. Partly, this was his intention, yet it is very significant that the biography by his dear friend Michel Seuphor, first published in 1951, is still the most personal one. Seuphor had gotten to know Mondrian in Paris in April 1923. It is very touching to see the admiration for the 'master' that still resonates in his book. In Germany, this biography was first published in 1957. The editor mentioned that Mondrian is still almost unknown among the broader public and that he wants to save Mondrian from oblivion.

In terms of visibility, Mondrian is the complete opposite of the 'world champion of self-promotion', Le Corbusier. Every time I see a photograph of Mondrian I have to think of Le Corbusier, too. The two men share a lot. They incorporate a new type of man in the modern industrial era. Both dress elegantly in ready-made suits, both sport their significant round glasses. The modern man is universal, not individual anymore. The photos that were made in Mondrian's New York studio right after his death, his round glasses neatly lying on a small side table, immediately remind me of Le Corbusier's interior sketches. Coincidence? In 1920 Mondrian published his brochure " 'Aux homes futures'. In 1926 'Vers une architecture' was published by Le Corbusier. *Zeitgeist?*

Everyone will recognize a Mondrian painting immediately, at least a painting from his neo-plasticist period. But his early paintings will make one doubt. From 1905 – when Mondrian had his first studio on Rembrandt Square in Amsterdam – he experiences the evolution of modern painting on his own. It is his ambition to become a well-known and well-regarded painter. While searching for his own expression, Mondrian becomes inspired by French Fauvism and Cubism. His first period spent in Paris is supposed to get him closer to Picasso and Braque. In the Netherlands he signed his work with his proper name, Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan Jr. In a Paris exhibition catalogue dating from 1912, he is listed as Pierre Mondrian. He liked the spelling 'Mondrian' very much and used it from then on. It gives his name a certain allure and can be seen as an outer sign of breaking free from the small-town background of his father's world (Stap, 2011, p. 87).

While he is staying in the Netherlands for a holiday in 1914, the First World War unexpectedly breaks out. Mondrian cannot go back to Paris. He is forced to stay in Holland, where he lives in seven different locations in the artistic village of Laren. There he spends the Sunday afternoons with 'heavenly glance and head askew,'dancing in hotel Hamdorff (Stap, 2011, p. 95). The art historian H.P. Bremmer gets him into contact with the

wealthy Helene Kröller-Müller. In exchange for a small grant, Mondrian has to make four paintings per year for the lady. Mondrian leads a humble life of his own.

When the First World War is over in 1918, Mondrian wants to go back to his studio in Paris. The period 1918-1919 may not be the beginning of Mondrian as an artist, yet it marks the beginning of his (theoretical) work in neo-plasticism. It is a beginning full of disappointments. Mondrian will no longer receive the yearly grant from H.P. Bremmer. He also has to face that, on an artistic level, he has left his idols Picasso and Braque far behind, which makes him feel very lonely. Although Mondrian wants to leave Paris, going south to the countryside, he stays in the city.

26, rue du Départ, near Gare Montparnasse, will be his address until 1936. From 1920 onwards, his studio becomes a world apart. 'This ... is an indication of Mondrian's desire for a social framework for his art. Since there was none, Mondrian constructed it himself. He exhibited his own studio as the workplace of a creative artist of enduring merit' (Deicher, 1994, p. 57). The well-known photographs from this period show a white and sober interior, just like a three-dimensional interpretation of his own paintings. It also shows his contact with Theo van Doesburg and De Stijl. Everything is white; the walls are covered with coloured patches which he continuously kept shifting, creating new situations over and over again (Locher, 2000, p. 21). Mondrian himself remains invisible. He withdraws from public life and keeps working on his paintings, which at first glance appear very simple. 'In so doing he established a myth. He has since been repeatedly described – in an almost unacceptable stereotype of what he really was – as a monk or a saint of painting, a priest "officiating the white altar"' (Deicher, 1994, p. 64). After having visited Mondrian in his studio, the American journalist Charmion von Wiegand characterizes him as follows: 'Mondrian is a light, thin man, half-bold with ascetic features of a catholic priest or a scientist'. (Seuphor, 1957, p. 62) Something that cannot be missed in his studio is his gramophone. Mondrian has a collection of jazz records and is always eager to get the latest records from America. Duke Ellington is his favourite.

Michel Seuphor characterizes the period between 1920 and 1926 as the period of the classical Mondrian paintings, a time that for Mondrian as a person is characterised by solitude, disease and poverty (Seuphor, 1957, p. 160). It is the period in which he keeps developing the theme of vertical and horizontal lines from his 'pier and ocean' paintings from 1916-1917, which he made in the coastal town of Domburg. The playful lines are getting more and more abstract, the tempered colours finally give way to the basic

colours. His paintings are no longer supposed to be a representation of reality, but of universal truth. Mondrian hardly sells a painting, and if so, at a very low price. When he is broke, he paints a little piece, showing a flower. There are dozens of paintings by him like this, showing a chrysanthemum. Mondrian is disgusted. This has nothing in common with his art, and he would rather starve than continue with the flower pieces. As a result he bans green from his pallet of colours. When sitting in a café, he places himself with his back towards the window, so that he does not have to see the trees. Life and art are one to Mondrian.

## Changes

From 1926, life changes for Mondrian. The American artist and Maecenas Miss Katherine S. Dreier buys a painting, which is exhibited that very year in an exposition by the Société Anonyme in Brooklyn. In the acknowledgements of the catalogue, Ms. Dreier writes: 'Holland has brought forth three great painters, who – even if they are logical expressions of their country – have broken up the limits of their country by their personality. The first one was Rembrandt, the second van Gogh, the third is Mondrian ... Here is Mondrian, who – starting from a strong individualistic expression – reached a clarity, which has not been reached before him' (Seuphor, 1957, p. 164).<sup>43</sup> A first recognition for Mondrian and his new art, of which it is very interesting to note that it comes from the New World. That same year, Mondrian publishes his ideas on neo-plasticism. It can be seen as resume and manifesto of his work, created in solitude.

Mondrian is selling paintings more often now, and his life becomes less lonely. He has a group of friends and receives visitors from The Netherlands. He becomes a member of the group 'Cercle et Carré', founded by Michel Seuphor in 1930, and may be regarded as its intellectual centre. Later he also becomes a member of the group 'Abstraction – Création'. Dancing remains his favourite occupation in his spare time. In an interview with the Dutch newspaper *DeTelegraaf* dating from September 1926, Mondrian is very upset that the Charleston has been forbidden in The Netherlands. If this is not

43 "Holland hat drei große Maler hervorgebracht, die – so sehr sie zugleich der logische Ausdruck ihrer Heimat sind – durch die Kraft der Persönlichkeit die Grenzen ihrer Heimat sprengten. Der erste war Rembrandt, der zweite Van Gogh, der dritte ist Mondrian. ... Hier ist Mondrian, der – ausgehend von dieser stark individualistischen Ausdrucksweise – zu einer Klarheit gelangt ist, wie sie vor ihm noch nicht erreicht worden war."



about to change, Mondrian will never go back to his home country. The title of the novel by Max Dendermonde *Mondriaan, de man die charleston danste* refers to this interview (Dendermonde, 1994).

In 1934, Mondrian becomes acquainted with two men who will be of great influence for his further life. They are the English painter Ben Nicholson and the young American art student Harry Holtzman. Due to the international political tensions caused by the 'Sudetenkrise', Mondrian does not feel safe in Paris anymore. He fears war and bombings. On 21 September 1938 he accepts the invitation by Ben Nicholson and his wife Barbara Hepworth and leaves Paris for good. When arriving in London he claims, 'I'm on my way to America' (Stap, 2011, p. 141).<sup>44</sup> Mondrian becomes used to London. He tells his brother that he got rid of the endless fatigue he suffered in Paris. 'Maybe they are having too many aperitifs and wine over there', he assumes (Stap, 2011, p. 142).<sup>45</sup> He does not find the courage to go to America until the house next to him is destroyed in the London Blitz. The threat of war that he wanted to escape has come close. At the end of September 1940 Mondrian leaves England, and on 3 October 1940 he arrives in New York Harbour, where Harry Holtzman is waiting for him. Mondrian is then 68 years old.

## Mondrian in New York

In 1938, Mondrian wrote in a letter: 'Dear Holtzman, you know that I always had the wish to live in New York, but never dared to take the risk'.<sup>46</sup> Finally Mondrian has made it and is staying in New York with his friend. He loves the city and its modern vitality; he likes the skyscrapers, which in an interview he describes as 'not too high, but just good like this'. Seuphor assumes that the rectangular street pattern reminds Mondrian of the Amsterdam canals. On 22 September 1942 Piet Mondrian becomes an American citizen.

Under the patronage of the rich Holtzman, life changes for Mondrian. He now has a gallerist, Valentine Dudensieg, who is able to sell his paintings fairly easily in his Valentine gallery. In January/February 1942 and March/April 1943 Valentine organises exhibitions for Mondrian in his gallery. Among the people buying his art is Peggy Guggenheim, who Mondrian knew in Paris. Mondrian participates actively in the artistic life of New

44 "Ik ben op weg naar Amerika"

45 "Misschien drinken ze daar wat te veel aperitifs en wijn"

46 "Beste Holtzman, je weet dat ik altijd de wens had in New York te wonen, maar niet waagde het risico te nemen."

York, and gets to know many other artists like André Breton and Max Ernst, who also stay in New York because of the war in Europe. According to Peggy Guggenheim, Mondrian does not miss a party or an opening, where very often he is the focus of attention. He enjoys stepping out, going out dancing with his friend Sidney Janis. Charmion von Wiegand writes:

But his delight of dancing to Boogie Woogie music was unfeigned. He asked most earnest whether I thought he was too old to ask the ladies to dance and seemed much relieved when I said no. He had a wonderful sense of rhythm but liked very complicated steps, and he held me at a disconcerting distance – which did not make dancing with him easy. In the middle of the dance, when the orchestra switched from boogie-woogie to jazz, he stopped abruptly: ‘Let’s sit down. I hear melody’ (Nieuwenhuis, 2012, p. 38).<sup>47</sup>

Despite all the changes and the incentives of the city, Mondrian’s studio on East 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and from 1943 onwards on East 59<sup>th</sup> Street, resembles his Paris studio. White and sober, decorated with the well-known colour patches on the wall and white lacquered fruit crates as furniture. Seuphor calls it the hermitage of an ascetic. Yet, something has changed. The Paris studio was an artificial world apart with Mondrian as its creator and lonely inhabitant. Now, there is a difference between the inner world (the studio) and the outer world (the city). Mondrian feels completely at ease in New York. He feels safe with regard to the threats of war, his economic situation is better than it has ever been before and he has many friends. The outer world contrasts with the inner world of his studio. As in Paris, Mondrian withdraws to the inner world for working. But it is no longer the abstract and theoretical work of the years between 1920-1926 when he was working on a painting like an architect with sketch paper and ruler. In this white world with its colour patches, the rhythm of the city can now be heard. The outer world has entered the inner world. The Madonna dances the ‘Boogie Woogie’.

In 1941, the painter Carl Holty introduces a new invention to Mondrian: coloured tape. Along with his changed attitude, Mondrian radically changes his manner of working. The black lines disappear and give way to coloured

47 “Maar zijn plezier in het dansen op boogiewoogiemuziek was ongeveinsd. Hij vroeg in alle ernst of ik dacht dat hij te oud was om de dames ten dans te vragen en leek zeer opgelucht toen ik nee zei. Hij had een geweldig gevoel voor ritme, maar hield van zeer gecompliceerde passen en hield mij op een oncomfortabele afstand – wat het dansen met hem er niet makkelijk op maakte. Toen het orkest midden in een dans plotseling van boogiewoogie op jazz overging, stopte hij abrupt: ‘Laten wij gaan zitten. Ik hoor melodie.’”

(tape) lines. While in Paris, Mondrian was reflecting the height and thickness of his black lines for days. Now, he is experimenting with the tape, working playfully and intuitively. He no longer talks about his painting but about his finds. 'I am not interested in paintings, I am interested in finds', he claims (Stap, 2011, p. 154).<sup>48</sup>

*Victory Boogie Woogie* is one of those finds. Mondrian first tells Charmion von Wiegand about a composition he had dreamt of and of which he already has made a sketch. On 13 June 1942, he begins to work on it. He experiments with the tape, so that according to Charmoin von Wiegand the canvas looked 'as a mummy, completely consisting of coloured lines' (Stap, 2011, p. 155).<sup>49</sup> Because the painting remained unfinished, it is still covered with tape. Locher regards it as research in new accents and rhythms. 'The intensity of the colours dancing around and the vital dynamics of the broken-up network of lines undoubtedly reflect the dynamic life of New York City' (Locher, 2000, p. 30).<sup>50</sup> His vision matches what Mondrian himself states: 'Plastic art is not the expression of space but of life in space. Life establishes itself in plastic art by means of continuous opposition of forms and colors that determine space' (Mondrian 1942/1944 in Wieczorek, 2012, p. 263).<sup>51</sup>

The title of the painting is mentioned first by Sidney Janis in his book *Abstract & Surrealistic Art* published in December 1944 (Nieuwenhuis, 2012, p. 48). But on 17 January 1944, Mondrian had already declared to Charmion von Wiegand that he was very content with *Victory Boogie Woogie* (Stap, 2011, p. 161). The meaning of Victory in the title remains unclear, since Mondrian never gave an explanation himself. It could refer to the longed for victory of the allied forces. But it could also mean the victory of New York City, as it could be the victory of 'Boogie Woogie'. Mondrian states in an interview in 1943: 'True Boogie Woogie I conceive as homogeneous in intention with mine in painting: destruction of melody which is the equivalent of destruction of natural appearance; and construction through the continuous opposition of pure means – dynamic rhythm' (Nieuwenhuis, 2012, p. 48).<sup>52</sup>

48 "Ik ben niet uit op schilderijen, ik ben uit op ontdekkingen"

49 "als een mummie die volledig uit gekleurde lijnen bestond."

50 "De felheid van de door elkaar dansende kleuren en de vitale dynamiek van het opengebroken netwerk van de lijnen weerkaatsen ongetwijfeld het dynamische leven van New York City."

51 "Beeldende kunst is niet de uitdrukking van ruimte, maar van het leven in de ruimte. Het leven komt in de beeldende kunst tot stand door middel van de voortdurende tegenstelling van vormen en kleuren die de ruimte bepalen."

52 "De intentie van de ware boogiewoogie beschouw ik als homogeen met de mijne in de schilderkunst: destructie van de melodie, wat gelijk staat aan destructie van de natuurlijke verschijning; en constructie door de voortdurende tegenstelling van zuivere middelen – dynamisch ritme."

## The Rhythm of New York

The first day after his arrival in New York, Harry Holtzman let Mondrian hear a recording of the 'Boogie Woogie Kings'. Mondrian is enthusiastic, shouting 'Enormous – enormous'. In Paris, Mondrian already had a great collection of jazz records, but here in New York he falls under the spell of the 'Boogie Woogie'. This piano music is built from the 'walking bass' of the left hand and short improvisations of the right hand, literally playing upon it. 'Boogie Woogie' is no composed music, having a real beginning and end. The bass line keeps revolving; the short solos are always different. Looking at 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' and 'Victory Boogie Woogie' one can easily see the analogy of the musical structure and the paintings. On the bass line of the coloured lines and patches, the coloured dots are dancing like fugitive notes. The curator of the Museum of Modern Art, J.J. Sweeney, writes in 1944: "... led from one group of colour notes to another at varying speeds; (against the) constant repetition of the right angle theme, we experience simultaneously a persistent bass chord sounding through a sprinkle of running arpeggios and grace notes from the treble' (Wieczorek, 2012 p. 264).

Tim Ingold refers in his article 'The Temporality of Landscape' (Ingold, 2000), to the analogy of orchestral performance and social life. A musician in an orchestra playing an instrument has to look at the conductor as well as listen to his fellow musicians at the same time. This is a condition for a successful performance. Ingold calls it resonance. He recognizes the same kind of resonance in the movement and behaviour of people, which he regards as a condition for sociality. Just like in music, life has its rhythmic cycles and repetitions. Movement, the ups and downs of the cycles, is rhythm. Tension can delay the cycles, but cannot stop it. The more tension, the more resolution is required. As in music, in life there is not only one, but many cycles at the same time. There is a whole network of rhythms. The moment the music plays, everything comes to life. This immediately reminds us of De Certeau and the movement of the Wandersmänner. 'Boogie Woogie', with the revolving bass line, can thus be regarded as the rhythm of New York. It becomes the metaphor of the city.

### *Victory Boogie Woogie* as Authored Landscape

In 1941, Mondrian publishes a small piece of prose of only six pages that can be seen as his autobiography: 'Towards the True Vision of Reality', edited by the Valentine gallery. Susan Deicher notes:

This 'true' vision was, of course, the one that Mondrian had thrown out of his studio window, and through which he had tried to prove from 1914 onward that the essence of the world could better be captured by abstract painting than by representational methods of portrayal. In a survey of his life, Mondrian now wrote as if he had lived in his studio from the time of his birth. He described a life such as he had never lived, a dream life, stylised as a work of art and as the imaginary source of his art. This goes some way towards explaining why, in his later years, Mondrian abandoned all the helpful theories he had put together throughout his life to underpin the meaning of abstract art. He was now certain that it was enough to live in order to be able to paint correctly (Deicher, 1994, p. 85-86).

There may be no bigger contrast between the lonely theosophist, who in 1926 published his pamphlet on neo-plasticism in which he defines the elements of which a painting may or may not consist, and the vital man, who eagerly absorbs the rhythm and modernity of New York City. Just like New York, Mondrian remains a man of extremes. His last three paintings, *New York City*, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie* in particular witness the change. They are undoubtedly images of New York, but much more, they portray the change in the painter's attitude, who – at the age of 68 – begins a new, artistic life. It is important to see the impact 'Boogie Woogie' had on this development. Cooper writes: "(...) a new technology of unity, suggesting a single, active texture. This degree of fusion is what really distinguishes *Victory Boogie Woogie* from *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. In *Victory*, one can no longer tell a thick mosaic line from a column of planes, or a group of adjacent lines from a checkered grid' (Cooper 1998, pp. 136-137). Cooper sees this single active structure in the painting in analogy to a good boogie-woogie piano player, where you cannot distinguish between the left and the right hand playing anymore.

Of course there is a big group pointing to the visual association with New York like the 'flashing lights' and 'the grid-iron pattern of the city streets' (Cooper 1997, p. 289). The most intriguing summary of this kind is written by Mondrian's dear friend Michel Seuphor. Apparently he considers Mondrian's passion for 'Boogie Woogie' a 'derisory spectacle' (Wieczorek 2012, p. 264), but in his 1951 biography he translates the visual excitement of New York as 'Boogie Woogie': 'I would like to recognize a picture of New York in this last painting ... The brightly lit skyscrapers, just like one can see from the steps of the Plaza Hotel, are a Victory Boogie Woogie. But at night time this applies to all of New York. The flight of the big buildings,

from Central Park West to Columbus Circle, which appear just like a wall, is a Victory Boogie Woogie. And when walking up 42nd Street from Public Library to Times Square, at your left you will face another Victory Boogie Woogie. And the whole Rockefeller Centre, no matter from which side you look at it, once more a Victory Boogie Woogie’.

One can conclude that each artist – whether conscious or not – is influenced by the environment in which he lives. A threefold and inevitable collaboration on the piece is performed by the direct environment (which the artist perceives), by the inner compound of his individuality (which the artist feels), and finally by his motivations (thus, what the artist wants)” (Seuphor, 1957, p. 186).<sup>53</sup>

It is stunning to realize how close Seuphor comes to the text of Marwyn Samuels from 1979. With the three elements mentioned by Seuphor, we have all the ingredients named by Samuels for authored landscapes. We have the landscape, which in our case is New York, we have the impression, which Seuphor attributes to the individuality of the artist, and we have the interaction of the two, which in fact is the act of portraying by the artist. Like this, *Victory Boogie Woogie* can be regarded as authored landscape *avant la lettre*.

Mondrian may be seen as author of New York, taking a position between Samuels and De Certeau. In terms of Samuels one can see him as ‘the elite’, as a prominent maverick. His paintings reflect his fascination for the rhythm of the city, whether as movement of the Wandersmänner described by De Certeau, or as a metaphor for the city according to Ingold. Mondrian in fact does not change the appearance of the New York cityscape with his paintings, as Sullivan does with his skyscrapers. Yet he has developed a new and abstract image of the city, which leads to a totally new image of New York City. It is no longer based on visual perception, which for Mondrian

53 “Was meine Meinung betrifft, so möchte ich in diesem letzten Werk ein Bild von New York sehen.. Die erleuchteten Wolkenkratzer, grade so wie man sie von den Stufen des Plaza Hotels aus sieht, sind ein Victory Boogie Woogie. Aber das gilt bei Nacht für ganz New York. Die Flucht der großen Buildings, die sich vom Central Park West in Richtung zum Columbus Circle wie eine aufgerichtete Wand ausnimmt, ist ein Victory Boogie Woogie. Und wenn man die 42th Street von der Public Library zum Times Square hinaufgeht, so hat man links abermals einen Victory Boogie Woogie vor sich. Und das ganze Rockefeller Centre, von welcher Seite man es auch ansieht, nochmals ein Victory Boogie Woogie.

Man kann daraus aber folgern, daß jeder Künstler – ob bewußt oder unbewußt – dem Einfluß des Milieus unterliegt, in dem er lebt. Eine dreifache und unvermeidliche Mitwirkung am Werk wird geleistet von der unmittelbaren Umgebung (die der Künstler sieht), von der inneren Zusammensetzung seiner Individualität (die der Künstler fühlt), und schließlich von seiner Geisteskultur (von dem also, was der Künstler will).”

was never a subject of interest in his neo-plasticist paintings. Instead, these paintings visualize the interaction of Mondrian's mental and material world.

Tim Ingold, who approaches landscape from the 'dwelling perspective', in which the difference between naturalistic and constructivist approaches is no longer made, defines landscape as follows: 'As the familiar domain of our dwelling, it is with us, not against us, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are part of it' (Ingold, 2011, p. 191). Mondrian's biography makes it obvious that he has become a part of New York. The rhythm of the city, the attention he receives and the success as a painter that he had always longed for leave their traces in his paintings. Michel Seuphor cites a theosophical quotation, which he thinks can be seen as the credo of Mondrian's life: 'Be a force focussed on evolution' (Seuphor, 1957, p. 178).<sup>54</sup> Mondrian always keeps renewing himself. *Victory Boogie Woogie* is the beginning of a new phase in Mondrian's oeuvre, which alas he could not work out. On 1 February 1944, Mondrian died at the age of 72 in New York.

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54 "Sei eine auf Evolution gerichtete Kraft".



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# 11 Shanghai: The Biography of a City

*David Koren*

## **Abstract**

Shanghai is an example of a city with a layered landscape biography along the lines of Marvin Samuels, but with an equally rich representation in popular culture, which has developed simultaneously with the city. Through expressions in, for instance, cinematography, comics or advertisement, millions of people around the world have encountered Shanghai, and these images determine the 'image' of the city to a great extent. The translation to this popular culture has led to a kind of reductionism, through which – following Wohl and Strauss – the city can be accessed. These images can even be seen as a type of immaterial heritage. Of course, both biographies are closely related to each other, but several elements show discrepancies. An example of this is the fictional element (the free interpretations in popular culture), the adaptation of western or eastern perspectives on the city and the western desire for the exotic. Still, both biographies appear to play an important role in the profiling and positioning of the city in the present time. Formerly, controversial elements of the landscape biography were used for 'scripting' the urban space, and the characteristics that were previously abhorred are resurfacing after the decades of attempted communist 'correction'. The use of both physical heritage and the 'character' of the city is the key to a successful 'reintegration' of Shanghai in the global community.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, Shanghai, urban representation, popular culture, colonial heritage

## **Introduction**

If a city had to represent a century, Paris would be the symbol of the 19<sup>th</sup> and New York of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The undisputed candidate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is Shanghai, the largest city of China, which in turn is – in terms of population – the biggest country in the world. Moreover, the Chinese economy is the second largest in the world and Shanghai is undoubtedly the city that is pulling it forward. Twenty years ago, few could have imagined that this

city would gain such a prominent position. Shanghai's role seemed to have been played out after a dynamic century (1842-1949) with the communist take-over of 1949 (Yatsko, 2003).

The old gateway to China has rolled out its red carpet once again. The city's renewed economic significance has gone hand in hand with a big urban transformation, which has drastically changed the skyline of the city in a short period of time. This is no longer shaped by the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century buildings along the Bund on Puxi, the left bank of the Huangpu river, but by the skyscrapers in Pudong, on the right bank.<sup>1</sup> This new Central Business District seems to be well on its way to dominate the city both physically and iconographically with its skyscrapers that reach hundreds of meters up in the air (Den Hartog, 2010).

The division of the city between Puxi and Pudong can also be related to a remarkable difference between the symbolization of the city in popular culture and the actual heritage of the city. The classic reputation of the city as the 'Paris of the East' or the 'Whore of Asia', which has its origins in the 'golden' 1920s and 1930s gives the impression that the majority of the city is shaped by places out of pleasure, brothels and opium dens (Dong, 2001). The reality is more nuanced.

The authors discussed in this chapter are divided into two groups. The first group consists of authors "on the ground", the initiators and architects who have shaped and formed the city (see Kolen, chapter 3). The second group consists of the authors who influenced and wrote the image of the city. This group includes filmmakers, comic artists and other creatives. The main question of this chapter is: what is the relation between the physical 'authored landscape' of Shanghai and its representation in popular culture?

To answer this question, I will investigate which authors have contributed to the actual urban landscape and what their significance has been for the iconography of the city. Before I illustrate the forming of this image in terms of the biographical concept, I will first set out the methodological framework and further define the research topic. Then I will approach the research question in four chronological paragraphs, each divided into 'landscapes of impression', 'landscapes of expression', and a concluding paragraph about Shanghai in popular culture.

1 The word "Bund" originates from India and literally means 'river bank'.

## Landscape Biography and the City

Since the 1970s, the landscape biography has been the object of a large number of geographical, archaeological and historical reflections (Samuels, 1979; Kopytoff, 1986; Roymans, 1995; Gomez, 1998; Holtorf, 1998; Kolen, 2005). The geographer Marwyn Samuels (1979), especially, emphasizes the role of the individual in the (urban) landscape. In his view, individuals continually 'write' the 'text' of the urban space. Even though many urban transformations can be traced back to 'big' societal, political or socio-economic developments, they can often *also* be traced back to acts, ideas and the creative powers of individuals. There would be no Shanghai without tycoon Victor Sassoon. Landscapes always absorb elements of the many people and groups who build their existence in it. Samuels identifies a 'landscape of impressions', a layer of ideologies and cultural representation of space, which in turn forms the context of the actual creation of landscapes, the 'landscapes of expression'. This last concept is the physically visible, materialized landscape. According to Samuels, this landscape then influences and inspires the experiences and concepts of landscape of the people. Because of this, there is a continuous dialectical movement in which spatial experience and imagination on the one hand and spatial acting on the other influence and succeed each other.

Another aspect in this urban biography is the inheriting of heritage. The archaeologists Jan Kolen (2005) and Cornelius Holtorf (see Chapter 7) identify the dynamics of this aspect and speak of the 'past in the past', following archaeologist Richard Bradley (1998). Through new developments a (urban) landscape gains new meanings that require a new way of dealing with or reacting to the urban heritage. With that, Kolen argues that heritage is part of the temporality of the landscape and therefore cannot be classified definitively or undisputedly. Every community continuously makes new choices with regard to the representation of its own city and, consequently, picks and chooses from everything in the city that has been inherited from the past.

Several aspects of the landscape biography are already implicitly mentioned in an early article by city sociologists Richard Wohl and Anselm Strauss (1958). They argue that a city has its own identity and personality. This was – especially at the time – a fairly innovative view. The city's 'personality' influences its inhabitants, but also the image that visitors have of the city. Moreover, a (big) city can barely be comprehended because of its many dimensions and subtleties, not even by its own inhabitants. Social networks between various groups of inhabitants, the actual physical acts and the various uses of symbols are tools to get a grip on the complex reality. These symbols are a form of reductionism: they create a kind of façade to

reach an interpretation to 'grasp' the city. Furthermore, Wohl and Strauss argue that people need a framework or 'vocabulary' to express the character of the city and define its essence. However, the sum of characteristics that are ascribed to a city can become so large (and contradictory) that the attempt to characterize the city is undermined. On the other hand, it is possible for cities to acquire a personality with a specific character and (personal) biography *because* of these characteristics.

The complexity of cities therefore asks for the creation of analogies and simplifications to get a grip on this elusive reality, and at the same time categorize and explain the multitude of impressions. Of course, the identified personalities of cities are not stable. Cities are by definition dynamic. Certain landmarks that represent a specific historical event can acquire an iconographical significance that transcends the monumental value. While the reputation of a city is usually derived from various types of heritage, this reputation itself can also be considered heritage. After all, it is a mental concept that is the subject of the process of remembering and forgetting.

The city of lights (Paris, romance), the eternal city (Rome, contemplation), the city that never sleeps (New York, dynamics) are a few examples of simplified reputations that conceal a myriad of images. Still, reputations or images can change quickly, especially if the heritage that it is based on disappears, as was the case with the Berlin Wall ('the divided city'). At the same time, there are counter-movements that attempt to preserve such an image, even if it is just from a touristic-economic perspective. A complicating factor in the case of Shanghai is that the image depends on both western *and* eastern perspectives and 'readings'.

Later, Anselm Strauss contributed new notions to the ideas he developed with Richard Wohl. In 1976 he introduced the concept of 'symbolic time', which seems applicable to Shanghai as well (Strauss, 1976). This concept aimed to link a city with a perceived time or age, further building up a city's identity. He also argues that a city cannot be classified as 'the same' when a significant part of the population has shifted due to whatever caesura in history. Hereby he implies that the identity of cities is based on far more than material and easily identifiable artefacts, such as humans and segments of society. A city with a recent caesura – like Shanghai – will probably be classified for instance as a more 'youthful' city, while a city with a longer continuous history and with the monuments to testify it, will probably be seen as 'older'. Of course, this is not necessarily true.

The ideas of Wohl and Strauss have received a tangible translation in the work of urban planner Kevin Lynch. In his 'The image of the city' (1960), Lynch uses his own parameters to analyse how the image of a city develops.

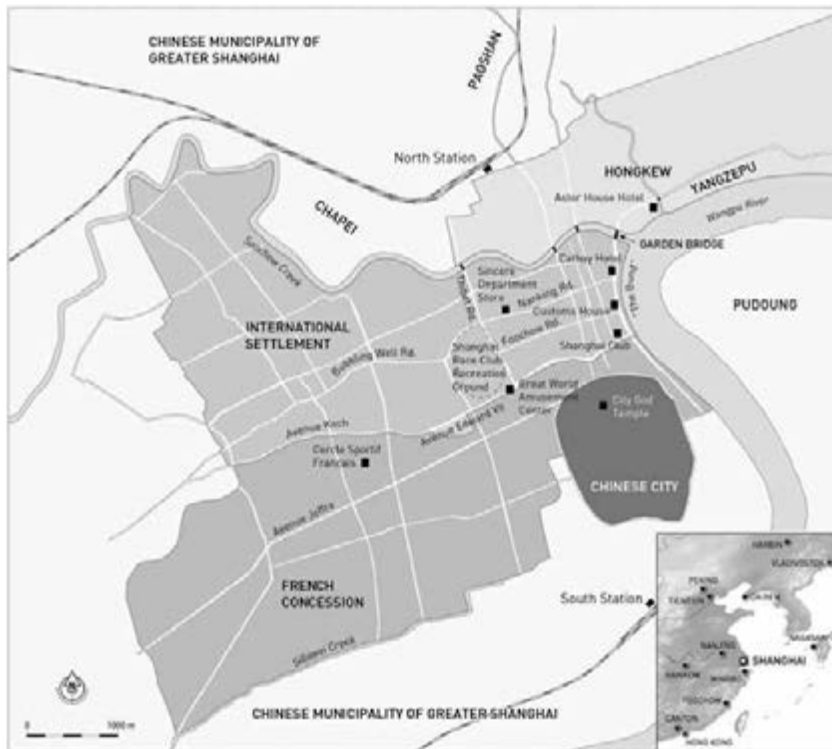
These parameters, called 'vocabulary' by Wohl and Strauss, are physical (roads, crossroads, 'separations', areas and buildings) and mainly refer to the distinguishability of the city and parts of it. Lynch does not pay much attention to connotations and other immaterial aspects, but he does offer ways to reach a form of city planning in which space is filled in in a way that people can recognize. Because of this practical use for city planners, Lynch, more so than Wohl and Strauss, has remained influential.

More recently, the communication- and culture scientists André Jansson and Amanda Lagerkvist (Jansson and Lagerkvist, 2009, pp. 25-53, and Lagerkvist, 2010, pp. 220-238) have attempted to relate the image-formation of cities to the dominant way in which these images are transferred: media and mass communication, adding a whole new dimension to the discourse on identity and representation of cities. The political scientists Daniel Bell and Avner de-Shalit (2011) again explore the soul of cities by exploring and observing in a humanistic-geographical manner, implicitly paying tribute to Wohl and Strauss. Their key-note concept is the *ethos* of a city, the prevailing characteristic. More defined: a set of values and outlooks that are generally acknowledged by people living in the city (Bell & De-Shalit, 2011, p. 2).

In the following sections, I will trace the life history of Shanghai from 1842, the year in which the western interference in the city began, until the present. Before 1842, the city was little more than a fortified Chinese settlement near the river, completely unknown and unimportant to westerners. In terms of city geography, I will focus on those parts of the city that have been most influenced by contacts with the western world: the International Settlement and the French Concession. These two areas in Puxi (the left bank) are joined together by the Bund, the almost two kilometres of shore with its remarkable row of colonial buildings.

Because this essay focuses on the relationship between the authored landscape (Samuels, 1979) and the representation in popular culture, I will explore these notions separately in the following paragraphs. Regarding the authored landscape, I distinguish the landscapes of impression from the landscapes of expression. The expressions of the city in popular culture will be explored separately because they are typical for the way in which people believed they had to imagine or 'sell' Shanghai in movies, commercials or literature. Architectural historian Nany Stieber (2006) distinguishes the 'image of the city' from the 'imagined city' and the 'imaginary city', meaning the way people experience the city, the way a city is represented and the way people imagine things about the city. The first two aspects can correspond, but also contain 'hidden messages that can reveal the true nature of a city'. Despite the fictional element they contain a certain degree of truth, through which

Figure 11.1 The boundaries of the juridical trichotomy in the 1930s (Chinese city, International Settlement and French Concession)



Cartography: Bert Brouwenstijn, VU University Amsterdam

popular culture gives an indication of the ways in which people from different backgrounds tried to 'grasp' the personality of the city in various periods. Even though we can never include everything – the used sources are of course only a small selection – they touch upon several aspects from which we, keeping in mind the method of Wohl and Strauss, can access the personality of the city.

## The Early Colonial City: Shanghai in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (1842-1899)

### Landscape of Impression

The European powers have tried to trade with the Middle Kingdom for centuries. The British, especially, traded opium, which continually caused conflicts with the Chinese authorities because of the destructive effects on



the Chinese population. After the First Opium War, Great Britain conquered Shanghai, and the Treaty of Nanking (1843) forced China to release five harbours to the trade of the western powers. Shanghai was one of these harbours and the British concession area received an extraterritorial status, which meant that the Europeans residing in the area were not under Chinese jurisdiction. The British concession area, directly to the north of the old fortified Chinese city, was joined by a French concession in 1847 and an American one in 1852, all located on the river. Because of the lack of boundaries the concession areas slowly expanded into the hinterland. Effectively, a European/western Shanghai developed next to the old Chinese city. In 1863, the British and American areas merged into the 'International Settlement', so that the city continued to be divided into three separate jurisdictions until 1949 (see figure 11.1). Taxi drivers carried three separate licenses (Sergeant, 1990, p. 18). Shanghai became a free city: people who arrived there did not need a passport or visa. Nobody was refused and it did not take long for the city to be flooded with refugees, merchants, fortune hunters and criminals.

The trade and economy underwent an explosive growth. On top of that, riots swept through China, which formally controlled the old fortified city. Because of this, in the decades towards the fall of the empire in 1911 it was impossible to maintain a central authority (Mitchinson, 1974). This unstable situation was continued after the revolution in 1911, due to the conflicts between the Nationalist government and the communists. Hence the development of Shanghai was hardly interrupted or halted by its 'big neighbour' until halfway through the 20th century.

### Landscape of Expression

British police officers guarded the International Settlement. Wealth and poverty existed side by side, Europeans and Chinamen were forced to coexist, people died in the streets while further on, the elite were entertained by horse races or rolled out the red carpet for a famous international visitor at one of the fanciest hotels in the world. A boardwalk of almost two kilometres long was built on the river and lined with European trading houses, at first large houses built in British-colonial style, surrounded by spacious gardens. As the city expanded (economically), the appearance of the Bund changed too. When they could afford to, banks, insurance companies, trade houses, clubs and hotels established themselves on the Bund. There they could exude prestige, success and (colonial) superiority through their buildings.

The French Concession had a character of its own, with shady streets and avenues named after French generals. While business was done in

Figure 11.2 Positioning Victor Sassoon's Cathay hotel as hypermodern and 'interesting', positioning the city as the 'Paris of the East' in passing



Source: Hibbard, 2007

the International Settlement (Ou Fan Lee, 1999), the French Concession had a strong cultural profile, with high and low culture, ranging from opium dens and brothels to theatres, smoky jazz bars and salons where intellectuals or Chinese communists gathered. The old Chinese city was mainly densely filled with street merchants, workshops, restaurants, tea houses and temples. Westerners did not often venture out into the old city, which was seen above all as dirty and dangerous (Denison & Yu Ren, 2006).

One of the most prominent inhabitants of pre-war Shanghai was the eccentric and rich Victor Sassoon, a descendant of the hugely successful

Jewish Sassoon trading family, which had managed to make a fortune in Bombay, India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by trading opium and cotton, among other things. The *pater familias* Elias Sassoon settled in Shanghai in 1850. His grandson Victor expanded the empire, and even though the family's role was played out after the communist take-over in 1945, many building projects still testify to the pre-war capitalism and wealth of the family of the tycoon. Important defining Art Deco buildings such as the Metropole hotel and the Broadway mansions on the Suzhou Creek were built by him. The most famous example was the Cathay hotel on the Bund, a model of luxury that every visitor of the city would visit sooner or later. The hotel rooms were decked out with large marble bathtubs with silver taps. The phone could be used to order a drink and the roof terrace was the stage of dancing until the late hours. The hotel attempted to expand its fame even further by comparing itself to the Parisian Eiffel Tower in advertisements, which at the time was a relatively new and sensational building (see figure 11.2). It is clear that we are dealing here with an 'author' in Samuels's sense of the word.

Other important authors of the city landscape were architects Clement Palmer and Arthur Turner, who worked together under the name Palmer and Turner from 1891 onwards and who designed a large part of the current architectural ensemble of the Bund. The groundwork of the fortune and good reputation of this studio was laid by the design of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank on the Bund, executed by Clement Palmer in 1883. Afterwards, this studio designed many more buildings on the Bund (Hibbard, 2007). Many of the Neo-Greco or neoclassical buildings are not very distinct on their own, but this architectural 'conservatism' was mainly meant to evoke a wholesome atmosphere, a 'homely' atmosphere. The message was: you can live here in wealth, in the same circumstances as in Europe. Thereby, 'their neo-classical domes and columns aimed to reassure rather than to delight. This, they declared, was no mirage on the edge of China, a modern phantasmagoria of elevators and air conditioning. It was there to stay, a future to take care of and worth investing in' (Sergeant, 1990, p. 96).

### Representation in Popular Culture

The concept of 'popular culture' is defined here as a widely spread culture, culture that is accessible for large groups of people (all over the world), such as (travel) literature, comics, movies and advertisements. This definition implies that popular culture – and with that, the image of Shanghai in this culture – was mostly shaped in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the period in which cultural expressions like the movie or the comic originated or blossomed.

The foundation of the image of Shanghai, however, was laid in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by important technological innovations such as the invention of the telegraph in 1866 and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Such developments formed a strong impulse for the trade and contacts between Shanghai and the west (Denison & Yu Ren, 2006). Moreover, Shanghai established itself as the cultural centre of China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for instance by showing the first movie on 11 August 1898 (Zhu, 2011). From 1899 onwards, Shanghai frequently showed movies, four years before this became common in Peking and the rest of China as well.

The first mentions of the city in western media are of course travel accounts and letters. These were not necessarily widely spread among a large audience, so their impact on the image formation of the city was limited. One example is the heartfelt cry of the second British consul in Shanghai, Rutherford Alcock, about the attitude of the average western businessman there, published in a book in 1863: 'In two or three years at farthest I hope to realise a fortune and get away; and what can it matter to me, if all Shanghai disappear in fire or flood? You must not expect men in my situation to condemn themselves to years of prolonged exile in an unhealthy climate for the benefit of prosperity. We are money-making, practical men. Our business is to make money, as much and fast as we can' (Denison & Yu Ren, 2006, pp. 43-44).

Other testimonies too speak of the location of the city in the mud of the river delta, uncomfortably hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city is far from the metropolis that people visit purely for entertainment purposes. Trade, greed and hedonism were the motto. The promise of money and quick wealth made the number of westerners, mostly men, rise exponentially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prostitution became very common, which led a British missionary to exclaim: 'If god lets Shanghai endure, then he owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah' (Dong, 2001, p.1). The city must have been notorious among seamen. The verb 'to Shanghai' referred to kidnapping seamen (forcibly or by drugging them) and bringing them to ships with a shortage of men (Dong, 2001). A Victorian travel writer complained about the difficulties when trying to do business in the new western enclave, which was mainly inhabited by Chinese who had never had contact with the west before. 'Even in such lordly institutions as the British banks on the Bund, it seems impossible to transact even such a simple affair as cashing a cheque without calling in the aid of a clerk, supercilious-looking, richly dressed Chinese, a shroff or comprador, who looks as if he knew the business of the bank and were capable of running it' (Dong, 2001, p.35). The city was brimming with developments, filled with two cultures that came together for the first time in their shared attempts to gather fortune and happiness.

## Part of the World System: The Heydays (1900-1949)

### Landscape of Impression

The death of Queen Victoria (1901) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) can be seen as the start of the diminishment of the British influence in Shanghai (Denison & Yu Ren, 2006). Especially during the First World War, the United States and Japan in particular intensified their influence in the city. Trade with America expanded and Shanghai blossomed into the third most important financial centre after New York and London (Den Hartog, 2010). Furthermore, it was the most important city of China and even of Eastern Asia. The city became 'first' in everything: the first electrical tram, the first stock market, the first cinema, the first publishers, etc. The population of the city grew quickly as well. International events such as the Russian Revolution in 1917, the persecution of the Jews in Europe by Nazi Germany and the increasing Japanese military manifestation in Eastern Asia led to flows of refugees to the city consisting of Russians, Jews, Chinese and Koreans. Shanghai was one of the few places on Earth where people without a passport or visa were still welcome. The population had grown to three million people in 1932, 70,000 of which were westerners (Sergeant, 1990). In comparison: in 1900 Shanghai only had around 650,000 inhabitants, 7000 of which were westerners.

Every newcomer brought his own dynamics and contributed to the image of a multicultural city where people from all over the world came to seek happiness, refuge or fortune. However, the continuous discrimination of the Chinese majority of the population caused some resistance. It is not surprising that Shanghai, as the most 'western' city of China, became a breeding ground of innovation, political debates and battle. Not only was the Chinese Communist Party founded here in 1921, the city also housed the financial headquarters of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Kuomintang administration. His wife, Shoong May-ling, was also born here. Inevitably, the city became the arena of the battle between the nationalists and the communists, whom Chiang Kai-shek hated passionately. In 1927 Chiang called on the help of Du Yuesheng, leader of the 'Green Gang', one of the most influential organizations in Shanghai, operating from the French Concession in the opium trade, gambling business and prostitution. After the joining of Du, tens of thousands of communists were arrested and murdered with the help of British and Japanese soldiers (Sergeant, 1990).

The communists went underground and stepped up their efforts elsewhere in the country, but Shanghai and communism would never reconcile again. In any case, the many and continuous shenanigans that provoked the

power of the colonial rulers were the writing on the wall. Nevertheless, the city lived and partied on as if there would be no tomorrow. The theatres, dance salons, gambling palaces, opium dens, banks and brothels did great business. Even after World War II, many averted their eyes from the literal advance of the communists in the direction of the city (Barber, 1979).

### Landscape of Expression

The cityscape, too, changed. Buildings became taller and Shanghai started to resemble New York more and more. Art Deco skyscrapers like the Metropole hotel and Victor Sassoon's Cathay hotel marked a break with the Neo-Greco buildings of British origin that had been dominant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Existing institutions such as the Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation on the Bund also commissioned new buildings because of the advancing growth. The manager of the bank ordered architect George Leopold Wilson at the beginning of the 1920s: 'Spare no expense, but dominate the Bund' (Denison & Yu Rehn, 2006, p. 135). In the French Concession, the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Figure 11.3 Russian-Orthodox church amidst the French Concession



The present function is a restaurant.  
Photograph: David Koren, 2009



saw more and more villas built that symbolized the ethnic background of the builder in question: Spanish, English, German or otherwise.

With the arrival of new (western) immigrants the palette of architectural influences became increasingly richer and more extravagant. The arrival of thousands of Russians did not just lead to the construction of Russian-Orthodox churches with their characteristic onion-shaped domes, but also to a strong boost for book shops, cinemas and clubs and places where the many stateless young blond Russian women sought refuge for their means of existence (see figure 11.3). The immigration of tens of thousands of Jews who arrived on the eve of World War II led to the construction of many synagogues, mainly in Hongkou (North Shanghai).

### Shanghai in Popular Culture

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Shanghai played a role in many books, travel accounts and novels from all over the world, sometimes as the subject of a travel guide, sometimes in the background or as the (determining) scenery that gave direction and atmosphere to the stories told. The city was seen as a 'devilish' place filled with decadence, a place haunted by the memory of the humiliations undergone by China because of western imperialism. The British-American author Christopher Isherwood, who visited Shanghai in 1938, looked at the raw capitalism of the western powers with a heavy heart. He described the Bund as follows: 'The biggest animals have pushed their way down to the brink of the water' (Sergeant, 1990, p. 97). This quote bombards the Bund as an icon of western imperialism, the antithesis of the idea of modernity and progress that the countries present in Shanghai wanted to carry out.

Some western authors were not taken with Shanghai, because it was too western and not Chinese enough. The Dutch poet, author and romanticist Jan Slauerhoff (1898-1936) only rarely gave an opinion about Shanghai in the stories he wrote in the 1930s, and when he did it was often not in a positive way.<sup>2</sup> The story 'Such is the life in China' in his 1930 volume *Schuim en As* recounts the city in a more melancholic way. To avoid loneliness, the ship's doctor goes to the luxurious Astor hotel, which welcomed famous guests like Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein in the same period (see figure 11.4). 'But when the seamen came, who did not belong here either, it would be more bearable. He saw couples dance and shake against the

2 See his travel notes in his posthumously published selection of letters and travel commentaries "*Alleen de havens zijn ons trouw*".



Figure 11.4 Interior of the luxurious Astor hotel, one of the few historical hotels of the city with a fairly authentic interior



Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein were amongst the many famous guests who frequented this hotel.

Photograph: David Koren, 2009

rhythm of the hysterical music. He did not think of the fact that this music, like Ford-cars, like himself, like nasal niggersongs and fanatical psalms and much more, including gospel and mission, that all of these things were export products of the big republic that even asserted itself in a country like China, arrogantly and naively' (Slauerhoff, 1987, pp. 119-120).

The French marine doctor Victor Segalen (1878-1919) stated in his *Lettres de Chine* that he was not very taken with this western city, in his eyes 'a "meaningless" city, at least for those who are not looking for Americanism or the bazaar' (Segalen, 2010, p. 273). Writers like Slauerhoff and Segalen identify the 'American element' that started to become prominent from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. While Shanghai looked completely 'European' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the modernity, skyscrapers, neon advertisements and the latest cars of the 1920s and 1930s were apparently associated with America.

Within Chinese literature a fierce polemic emerged in the 1930s between writers from Beijing and Shanghai (Scheen, 2006). Writers from the capital accused their colleagues from Shanghai of interlacing their stories with sex and decadence. The literary scene in Shanghai, which was the largest of China, was seen as an enclave that was radically different from the rest of China: a city full of modernity and international developments, but also moral deterioration, criminality and prostitution (see figure 11.5). A Shanghai literary movement in the 1930s describes the speed, chaos and sounds of the city in fragmented pieces. Authors such as Mu Shiying and Liu Na'ou let their decadent main characters be thrilled by jazz, beautiful women, fast cars and greed. Women usually play the part of femme fatales who deceive the male main character, like in a story by Liu Na'ou in which a seductive woman takes an interest in a man on the horse tracks when she sees him win a lot of money.

Shanghai also plays a role in one of the oldest comic series in the world, the adventures of Tintin. In the fifth adventure, 'The Blue Lotus', creator Hergé (1907-1983) sends his reporter to the Far East (see figure 11.6). This story was written in 1934 with the help of the elaborate documentation of a young Chinese student from Shanghai who studied in Brussels (Peeters, 2006). Even though there are no demonstrable locations in the book – despite the extensive documentation – the book gives off the atmosphere of Shanghai in the 1930s: the British police officers, the borders of the International Settlement, the (questionable) desires of the western powers, the Japanese threat of war, the opium trade and the busy street life play an important part. Hergé consciously made the decision to reproduce Shanghai in a timeless, abstract way, where atmosphere trumps the

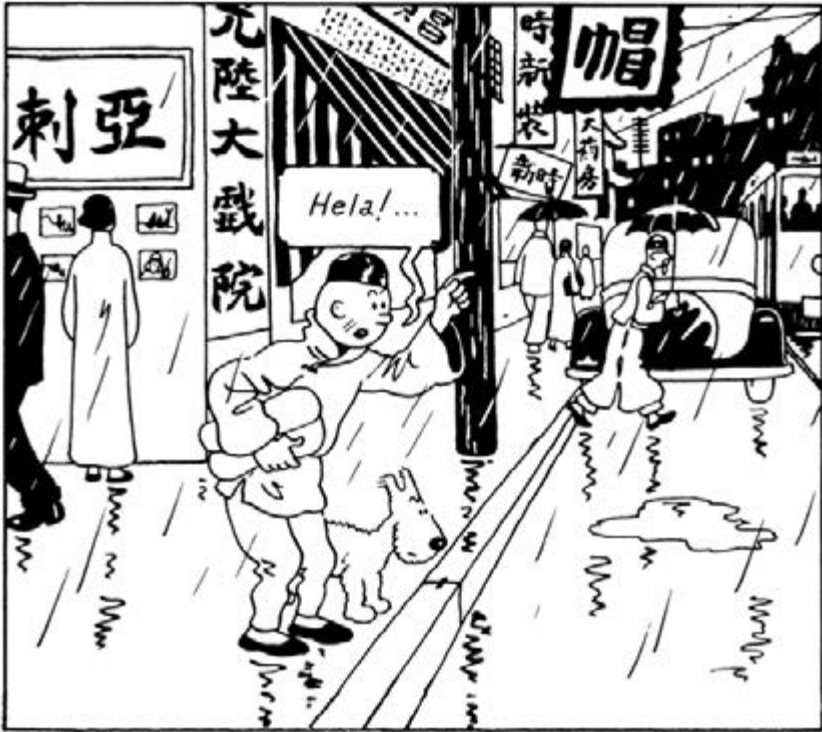
Figure 11.5 Cartoon that criticizes the influence of the west



Source: Denison & Yu Ren, 2006, p. 172

scenery. At the same time the portrait is almost more powerful than the existing icons like the Victorian buildings on the Bund. The modernity of the city is expressed by the abundance of vehicles, neon advertisements and means of communication like newspapers and telephones (Coblence, 2004). The modernity is almost similar to that of New York, a city Tintin – not accidentally – had visited just recently ('Tintin in America', Hergé, first published in 1932).

The reputation of the city as the 'whore of Asia', a decadent place of luxury, money, opium, triads and gambling has perhaps been expressed most drastically by the film industry, whose blossoming from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was in pace with that of Shanghai. One of the first films

Figure 11.6 Illustration from *Tintin – The Blue Lotus*

The comic contains a vast amount of details that correspond to the historical reality.

Source: © Hergé/Moulinart 2012

that gained worldwide attention and that featured Shanghai's personality as a main character was *Shanghai Express* in 1931, starring Marlene Dietrich. Apart from La Dietrich as 'Shanghai Lily', the film owed its fame to the Oscar for best cinematography. The film follows a courtesan who is travelling to Shanghai by train during the civil war of 1931. Even though the city itself is not pictured, it constantly plays a role in the background. The title of the film and the name of the main character alone suggest to the audience an exciting and sensual city, full of beautiful women who have something to hide. Similar motives and images are conjured up in *The Lady from Shanghai*, a film noir by Orson Welles from 1947, the time when Shanghai struggled to redeem itself after the horrors of World War II and was in the spotlights once again.

The Interbellum was also the time when 'fordism' found its way into the international economy. Because of this, advertisement took off. Advertising,

Figure 11.7 Cigarette advertisement from the 1930s



All the ingredients that determine the image of Shanghai are present: skyscrapers (modernity), stimulants (decadence), beautiful woman (sex) and the horse tracks (gambling, entertainment).  
Source: Denison & Yu Ren, 2006, p. 129

after all, had to be distinguishing, so that people would buy the one thing over the other. Shanghai did not just advertise itself (advertisements for tourism, see figure 11.2), but the city was often a *part* of advertisements. Cigarette advertisements in particular often used attractive, elegant women who were holding a cigarette. The image had to conjure up an atmosphere of decadence (see figure 11.7). Identifiable buildings that were supposed to look modern were often portrayed in the background. In the example of figure 11.7, we see the iconic Park hotel, the China United Apartments and – of course – the horse tracks. But, following Wohl and Strauss (1958) or Nancy Stieber (2006), even without these buildings a similar image would be enough to understand what it stands for and read the hidden messages this image evokes.

## Off the Radar: The Dark Years of Communism (1949-1989)

### Landscape of Impression

The Japanese invasion ending in the occupation of the International Settlement and the French Concession in 1941 marked the beginning of the end for the western presence in Shanghai. After a short intermezzo after the war, when the richest people had already left for Hong Kong and the city was as good as bankrupt, an army of farmer soldiers of the communist People's Liberation Army entered the city in 1949, astonished by the tall buildings, technical gadgets and sophisticatedly dressed people (Barber, 1979). Two worlds collided, two eras overlapped, a communist 'landscape of impression' became the determining factor of the development of the city in the next decades (Samuels, 1979).

For the communists, cities in general were suspicious from an ideological perspective – the city as a capitalist fortress that 'exploited' the 'pure' countryside (Den Hartog, 2010). The Great Leap Forward – the name of the second Chinese five-year plan that Mao had launched in 1958 – was geared towards the development of the countryside, a policy that was continued during the following Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). This policy was practical as well as ideological, as it was geared towards food production. In Shanghai the government decided to stimulate the industrialization only.

The negative perception of the concept of 'city' under the communist regime especially applied to Shanghai. The image the communists had of this city was extremely negative. Whereas Wohl and Strauss (1958, p. 525) present the possibility of literally taking a few steps back to get a grip on a



city, the communists had had years to perfect the image of the city. From the revolution of 1949, the preceding century was retroactively named the 'century of humiliation' (Scheen, 2006). The heritage of that century was thereby declared 'contaminated' too.

Even more than the material heritage, the perceived elite attitude, the mentality of the population, bothered the communists. It was seen as a form of 'mental heritage', originating from the damned century of foreign dominance. To stay within the interpretative framework of Wohl and Strauss (1958, p. 528): the communists ascribed a special personality to the city, its own character that could get no mercy. In the early 1950s there was even a proposal to get a grip on the parasitic, unruly and wicked city by moving half of the population to the countryside. Even though this plan was not executed, later on campaigns did take place to re-educate 'counter-revolutionaries', Christians, foreigners, corrupt officials or those belonging to the rich elite.

### Landscape of Expression

Immediately after the communist take-over, Russian city planners Benenikov and Simakov were invited to reflect on the future of Shanghai. In 1953 they came up with a plan to transform Shanghai into a 'compact socialist city'. This plan included a complete metamorphosis of the historical centre, but because of practical reasons only the area around the racetrack was tackled. Next to the trade houses on the Bund, this was one of the most important symbols of the decadence of Shanghai, a place where the (white) elite entertained itself with gambling, gossip and parading around. After the communist take-over this symbol of western decadence was used for a short period of time as an execution site for criminals and sympathizers of the nationalists (Den Hartog, 2010). In the new plan the racetrack was transformed into a huge square, symbolically named the People's Square, where the horses had to make way for parades in honour of the new regime.

To a limited degree there were some demolitions and adaptations, like the placing of a red star on the Custom House on the Bund, or the 'beheading' of churches as was the case with the Roman Catholic St. Ignatius cathedral. At the same time development took place, though only on a small level. One example is the Friendship Exhibition Hall, a classic Stalinist pompous building from the early 1950s to honour the friendship between the Soviet Union and China (see figure 11.8). This building was built on the site where the villa once stood that belonged to one of the richest foreigners of the French Concession, real estate and opium magnate Silas Hardoon (Betta, 2012). Hardoon was a business partner of David Sassoon and like the



**Figure 11.8** One of the most striking buildings from the communist era: the Stalinist Exhibitions Hall



The hall was built in the early 1950s to honour the friendship between the Soviet Union and China. Photograph: David Koren, 2009

Sassoons was a descendant of a poor Jewish family from Baghdad that had made the leap to Shanghai via Bombay in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In any case, the material heritage of Shanghai endured the communist era relatively well. During one of her first visits to the city at the end of the Cultural Revolution, journalist Harriet Sergeant ascertains that ‘nothing appears to have altered since the pre-war era. Shanghai is bigger, there are more people and a few new skyscrapers but otherwise communism has fallen on the city like a sandstorm, burying and preserving. The street names are different but not the buildings, from the office blocks and hotels on the Bund to the villas in the suburbs. Even the interiors are untouched’ (Sergeant, 1990, p. 5).

### Shanghai in Popular Culture

Ironically, one of Shanghai’s biggest actresses would severely curtail the film industry during this period. She is Jiang Qing, better known in the west as Mrs. Mao and one of the members of the Gang of Four. The films

that were still being made had a strong ideological content. Thematically (communist revolution, emancipation of farmers and workers, patriotism) the city Shanghai hardly makes an appearance. The majority of the (politically engaged) films is not translated and never finds its way to the west. After the communist take-over the blossoming literary scene in Shanghai was over too. The most influential authors were murdered or ignored until well into the 1980s because of the lingering western influences in their work (Ou-Fan Lee, 1999). Between 1949 and 1991 prose was selected on the grounds of political-societal themes rather than literary quality (Leenhouts, 2008). The only author that was still tolerated after the communist take-over was Lu Xun (1881-1936), who had found shelter in Shanghai in 1926 because he was sympathetic towards the Communist party and because, unlike many of his colleagues, he wrote many critical pieces about social relations.<sup>3</sup>

In the international media Shanghai is mentioned again as a small part of the programme of the famous state visit of American president Nixon to China in 1972. Even though Nixon politely speaks of 'the vibrancy of a great city, Shanghai', the city is at that point little more than a historic relic.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, all the attention goes to the political implications of the visit. The communist propaganda (posters, etc.) does not pay much attention to the city either, which is unsurprising given its controversial character. The Shanghai Propaganda Poster Museum, for example, has the biggest collection of communist propaganda in the entire country, but only has a handful of posters explicitly portraying Shanghai.

The economic liberalization under Deng Xiaoping and the first cautious investments by the west in Shanghai during the beginning of the 1980s slowly brings the city back into the sight of the international movie producers. Remarkably, they go straight back to the way things were before the communist take-over. *Shanghai Surprise* from 1987, starring Madonna and Sean Penn, continues where it left off 40 to 50 years earlier. The classic examples of opium, triads, beautiful women and rickshaws are dusted off and presented to the viewer. Another example is *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, a movie by Steven Spielberg that opens in a nightclub in Shanghai during the 1930s. The old Shanghai seemed ready for a comeback.

3 *Chinese posters*, August 5, 2012 <<http://chinese posters.net/themes/luxun.php>>; *Lu Xun* (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia), December 7, 2011 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lu\\_Xun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lu_Xun)>.

4 "Richard Nixon in China Part 3". November 3, 2011 <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tT53S9YgQeQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tT53S9YgQeQ&feature=player_embedded)>.

## 'In the Picture' Again: The Metropolis Awakens (1990-Present)

### Landscape of Impression

From 1990 onwards, Shanghai fares well once again. The Party grants the city the same advantages as the 'special economic zones', which means that the city now receives tax advantages, special programmes and government investments. As if from nowhere the economy, and with it, the city, starts to grow. The construction of the aforementioned Pudong starts, metro lines are built, new container terminals, a new airport and so on. Economically the focus is on information technology. Whereas during the 1980s most investments went to the south (the hinterland of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, etc.), now Shanghai is chosen as the front line in the delta of the Yangtze (Den Hartog, 2011). The new 'landscape of impression' consequently is directly translated into a completely new 'landscape of expression' (Samuels, 1979).

The direct 'physical growth' is mainly meant to give Shanghai a leading role again as a commercial and financial centre of China and the Asian region (Yatsko, 2003). Obviously, this growth transfers into the growth of other sectors like retail, hospitality and others. At the same time people realize that economic growth alone is not enough to give Shanghai back its pre-war grandeur and status. That is why the city invests in cultural facilities and big events as well, such as the World Expo of 2009. In the 1990s the vision of the city planners is changing (Hibbard, 2007). The city is seen more as a leisure landscape, where the public space is very important for the experience visitors have of the city. The city can be 'visible' again. Even the construction of Pudong is a careful way of scripting to lay down the image of the city as powerfully as possible (Jansson & Lagerkvist, 2009).

### Landscape of Expression

The economic change in course of the national government – and with that, the city government – has big consequences. The People's Square, or the former racetrack, was filled in with the new City Hall, the Shanghai Museum and the Grand Theatre, buildings with the potential to blossom into icons of the cultural rebirth of the city. It seems that the city is eager to shake off the dark years of communism, and embraces the new period by giving the 'parade square' a different meaning.

The same goes for the Bund. This robust structure, which was mostly an important main road during the communist regime with hardly any of the commercial functions it had during the colonial period, survives the

**Figure 11.9** Representation of an opium den in the new Shanghai History Museum, housed in the basement of the 468-metres-high Oriental Pearl Tower in Pudong



Source: David Koren, 2009

modernizing frenzy after the economic ‘take off’ by the city government’s open invitation to the international banks and hotels to come back to the buildings they once owned (Scheen, 2006). Moreover, the Bund gets a new meaning as ‘leisure landscape’, to parade, relax and enjoy the futuristic skyline on the other side. The revaluation of the Bund takes place in record time, during which old bank buildings, trade houses and the Custom House are renovated and usually transformed into luxurious clubs, hotels, shopping centres and businesses. Even though the most recent change of meaning seems to be inspired by economic motives instead of cultural historical consciousness, the colonial heritage seems to be definitively anchored in the same city where it used to have a controversial position.

However, because of the construction of Pudong, the Bund now literally lies in the shadow of the big skyscrapers on the other side of the river. The largest colonial buildings on the Bund are visually reduced to ‘midgets’. The millions of visitors of the city are mainly granted a glance at the futuristic area on the opposite bank of the river, the central business district, when they visit the Bund. The construction of Pudong is, apart from a functional urban extension, a careful and purposeful scripting of the urban space, an

implicit triumph of the still leading role of the Chinese Communist Party. The new Shanghai mainly wants to present itself as a new Chinese global metropolis, not just as a rebirth of a colonial city. The heritage is part of the city, but cannot dictate the entire image of the city. In any case, 21<sup>st</sup>-century Shanghai is restored: the richest and most cosmopolitan city of China. Even in the new representation of the city, the new Shanghai History Museum in Pudong, attention is paid to the opium trade and use of opium, the origins of the city (see figure 11.9). But this museum is located in the basement of the 468-metre-high Oriental Pearl Tower, literally burying the history of the city underneath its progress.

### Shanghai in the Media

The literature reflects the fast development of the city. During one of her recent visits to the city, the Dutch author Carolijn Visser speaks to a photographer, Mr. Xu, who has been documenting 'the old Shanghai' since the 1980s, when the economy slowly started developing, with its old colonial villas, pagodas, sampans, houses and alleys. He regrets the fact that the old is rapidly disappearing and that the 'ruins of completely demolished neighbourhoods refer to violence and battle' (Visser, 2008, p. 46). He also critiques the restoration technique of the buildings that do get to stay in the new Shanghai: '*restored means new*. They break everything down and then replace it with something that looks like it'.

The most recent economic development has also awoken interest in the west. A wealth of studies, books and inventories about the old pre-war Shanghai is published, about buildings, daily life, the heydays of blossoming and decadence (Sergeant, 1990; Ou-Fan Lee, 1999; Dong, 2003; Denison & Yu Ren *et al.*, 2006). They suggest that people have not forgotten the old image of the city. These publications even help to maintain and strengthen the existing images, partly because they focus attention on the first big period of growth in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In fictional literature the book *Shanghai Baby* by Wei Hui (1973-) is a typical exponent of the new generation that adjusts the image of Shanghai in the direction of the fast life in a current-day metropolis full of artists and writers. It is a semi-autobiographical work, in which the main character immerses herself in a world of sex, literature and art and tries to choose between two men who represent lust and love. The city appears in the books as a modern metropolis filled with entertainment where life goes on 24 hours a day. Wei Hui's book is still forbidden because of the uncommon amount of eroticism it contains. In a way the book maintains the reputation of the wild night life of

pre-war Shanghai, but more hedonistic and 'modern'. The book was adapted for the screen in 2007 by Berengar Pfahl in the same, slightly raw fashion.

This extra dimension does not alter the fact that films are still being made today that go back to the heydays of the city, like the film *Shanghai* (2010) by Mikael Hafstrom, in which a secret agent arrives in the Shanghai of the 1930s to investigate the murder of a colleague. The unique situation of the 1920s and 1930s is apparently too special an image to let go.

## Conclusion

Shanghai is a city with a special biography. This is partly a *material* biography that shows traces of a colonial capitalist society, a communist period and a city that seeks to be included in the global economy. As an 'authored landscape' (Samuels, 1979) Shanghai has gained a special place in both Chinese and international history, where the city is appreciated differently in different perspectives. From a Chinese point of view, Shanghai is mostly a disgrace that embodies the forced submission to the 'immoral' west, the 'whore of Asia' or the 'whore of the Orient'. From a western perspective Shanghai became a – literal – home away from home in the Orient, filled with the pleasures of life, the 'Paris of the East'. Implicitly this last title also positions modernity as an attribute, a city blessed with impressive buildings that measured up to metropolises like Paris and New York in terms of size, looks and comfort of accommodation. The architecture and design of public space plays an important part in this view, but apart from that, this second characterization implies a lifestyle, a *joie-de-vivre* that could mainly be found in the many salons, cafes, cinemas and other places of entertainment in the French Concession. Not only the big architectural 'statements' are of importance, but also the many 'ordinary' places where people came together and 'shaped' the city, like the trade on the sampans in the river, the performances of the girls in the theatres or the intellectual discussions in the salons. And when we look at Shanghai, not through the eyes of Samuels, but through those of Lynch (1960), we see the city as a relatively clear concept of a river, distinct intersections, special areas and various 'eyecatchers' (buildings). The city meets almost all the requirements to have a strong (recognizable) image, even just on a physical level.

However, Shanghai also has an *immaterial* biography. This is the biography of the representation of the city in words and images, recorded and spread by popular culture and the media. This is the biography of image formation, image and 'personality'. This second biography is partly a reaction to the aforementioned 'landscape of expression', but is also in part its own free form

Figure 11.10 The Bund by night in 2009, as seen from a skyscraper in Pudong



On the foreground the colonial buildings that in their current form arose in the 20th century.  
 Photograph: David Koren, 2009

that can be creative and fictional. It adds its own special dimension to the city, a dimension of images, stories, fiction, emotions and memories. Shanghai is an interesting case to show how both biographies develop in relation to each other, because Shanghai is in a way a 'new' city, which rose simultaneously *with* modern popular culture, like films, comic books and advertisements. The possibility of symbolic and iconographic reductionism to get a grip on the complex reality (De Certeau, 1984; Wohl & Strauss, 1958) was present in this city since approximately 1900. In the case of Shanghai, the 'pedagogy of symbolized space' (Bosma & Kolen, 2011) lives on in films, novels and political agendas, even though these spaces are not always explicitly mentioned. The racetrack is an example of a space that explicitly was appointed in a political program, in this case the program of the communists and their revulsion of this highly symbolic location. Indeed, the physical heritage often seems to be overshadowed by the images of the city in the representation of the city: the city as a collection of groups of people who busy themselves with surviving, enjoying, trading, debating and other things in the world of raw capitalism that defined Shanghai for almost a century. The media too focuses its



attention on this. If we string together several keywords, following the method of Wohl and Strauss (1958) to form an image of a city, Shanghai ends up with keywords like trade, cosmopolitanism, freedom, decadence and modernity.

Otherwise, the image of the city – which has been increasingly widely spread from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through news reports, films, travel guides, stories, etc., has in turn attracted large groups of businessmen, adventurers, fugitives and tourists to the city. Actual buildings – perhaps with the exception of the iconic Bund (see figure 11.10) – seem to play only a limited role in the image of the city, as opposed to for instance Paris or Rome. The strength of the image – the images and stories everyone has of this city – has become its own form of heritage. The city has above all gained a *personality*.

Almost inevitably, the two views of the personality of the city clash. Conflicts that have played in the background for a long time forcefully came to a head during the revolution of 1949. The communists did everything in their power to change and rewrite the image of the city, both in a physical way, for instance by transforming the racetrack into a parade square, but mostly by intervening directly and on a large scale in the lives of the people that make up the city.

With the change of course in the 1990s because of economic motives, the attention for Shanghai and its past came back full force. From a western view and tendency toward the exotic, also known as *‘fernweh’*, interest in the old images come back once again, as if there had never been a revolution. The revaluation of the physical heritage by the current rulers is also a remarkably clever move. In a global society, where cities are more and more the anchors of development, a powerful identity is worth its weight in gold (among others Florida, 2002 and 2008; Jansson & Lagerkvist, 2009; Lagerkvist, 2010 and Bell & De-Shalit, 2011). Moreover, the nostalgia for the heydays of the city in the 1920s and 1930s are an important drive that on the one hand connects Shanghai with the roots of the global city it had already been, and on the other hand forms an open invitation to the western world, where the memories of the old Shanghai have been kept alive through the immaterial biography of experiences, books, comics and films. The ‘imagined city’ and the ‘imaginary city’ have thus kept the image of the city vivid through times in which the city experienced a break with the past and was off the radar (Stieber, 2006). One could argue that Shanghai’s heritage is consciously used as a political strategy, as a *trait d’union* with the days of past glory and as a bridge to the future (Langerkvist, 2010).

The once controversial character of heritage no longer seems to play any significant role. The revaluation of the city takes place in a broader framework, in which heritage plays a part, but no longer is the whole story. Shanghai is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century city, a Chinese global metropolis that consciously creates a new (physical) image with a particularly futuristic skyline, directly

attached to the old, that seems to be subordinated. But especially the physical new architecture adjusts well to the familiar images of Shanghai we have known for a long time: modernity, decadence, dynamics and capitalism. Actually, Shanghai needs *new* investments to maintain these *old* images of modernity and decadence, to match its own personality. While doing so, it also secures her place as one of the most important metropolises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, both biographies seem to blend rather well again, further building up Shanghai's layered and complex personality.

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## 12 A Kaleidoscopic Biography of an Ordinary Landscape

Analysis of the Development of the Neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouwen* (Utrecht – the Netherlands)

*John de Jong*

### Abstract

Landscape is dynamic. Even during periods of relative permanence, its arrangement and appearance are gradually transformed as a result of changing spatial practices. This analysis of the neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouwen* provides some clues for a biographical approach that puts an emphasis on the social dimensions underlying the development process of landscape. Attention is paid to the ordinariness of landscape, emphasizing the importance of everyday practices. It is argued that the focus on meaning, representation and identity in landscape research should be supplemented (again) by an awareness of the effects of basal behaviour and sensations.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, *Buiten Wittevrouwen* (Utrecht), spatial order, spatial practices, transforming production

### Introduction

Reconstructing the biography of a landscape is like trying to unscramble a scrambled egg. You just cannot do it. Due to the variety of authors, the multiplicity of their actions, as well as the evolving condition of social relations, any attempt to unravel the social processes that underlie the transformation of our physical world is reckless. Moreover, it would be an impossible challenge to describe in detail the reverse impact the environment had on the knowledge, perceptions and practices of people that lived in the past. In addition to this complexity regarding the interpretation of the cultural dimension of landscape, retrospection is simply bounded by a limited pool of historical information. Just as relics and traces piled up in the present-day landscape, the collection of manuscripts, maps, images and film pictures that fill our archives

and drawers are testimonies of life stories that have been much more versatile and divergent than they could ever reflect to us. The same goes for narratives and oral history. Taking this fact into consideration, it should be noted that landscape research from a biographical perspective is restricted by a rather selective and fragmented social memory. In other words, a full reconstruction of personal contribution is impossible (Samuels, 1979). Therefore, we have to acknowledge that we are inevitably confined to what I am calling a kaleidoscopic biography. This perspective implies that one can only study the reciprocal relation between man and landscape through time, by deducing both outlines and subtleties from glimpses of the past.

From this kaleidoscopic perspective, this chapter explores several clues for a biographical approach that puts an emphasis on the social dimensions underlying the development process of landscape. By examining the case of *Buiten Wittevrouten*, it will be argued that human activities affecting the landscape successively are not random, but are to a high degree 'structured' by both an existing spatial order and a wider social order. Being one of the first urban developments that took place in the Dutch town of Utrecht at the end of the 19th century, the case illustrates the relation between social transition and spatial transformation. Although the continuity and dynamics of landscape are connected to the stability and change of institutions, spatial development is generated by people. Therefore, the role men of flesh and blood hold in the contextual genesis of their own surroundings is brought to the fore. By means of reconstructing the development of the neighbourhood, the nature of spatial practices shaping the physical appearance of the landscape is explored. Attention is paid to human conduct, stressing simultaneously its framed character and personal touch. Subsequently the focus shifts briefly to the mental aspects of landscape. Finally these different story lines are incorporated into a vision that emphasizes the ordinariness of landscape. One observation is that spatial practices are the sum of personal and collective acts not inevitably spatially directed, nor necessarily purposefully performed. Some points of departure are explored to study landscape as part of an ongoing process of transforming production of space, as it is driven by everyday life practices. The contribution of this chapter is the initiative it gives to link the biographical perspective on landscape to the geographical concept of social space. It focuses on a theme that is according to Kolen *et al.* (2010) at the heart of the biographical approach: landscape as a historically produced living environment.

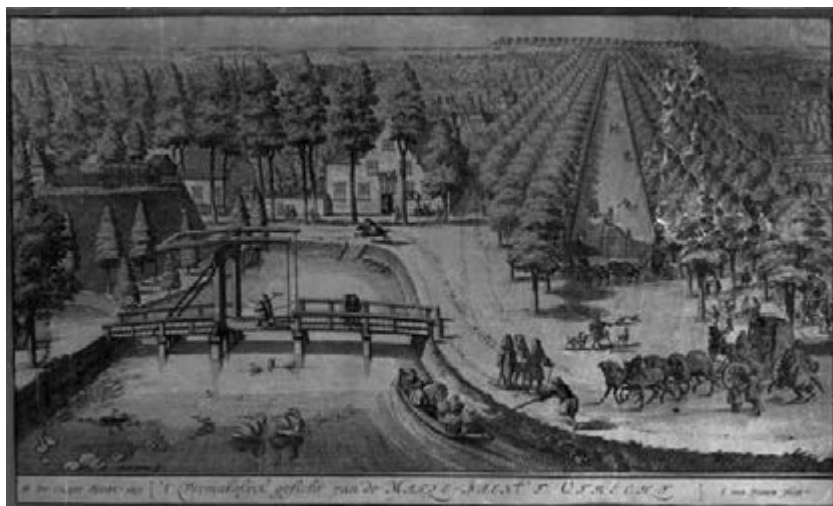
## Landscape Dynamics and Spatial Order

Generally, the design of a landscape is connected to a high degree with its past and extant uses. It can be interpreted as the temporary result of spatial practices, acted on the basis of mental ideas about its function and meaning, or performed from experience. In this discussion the concept of '*spatial order*' as applied by the architectural historian Auke van der Woud (2004) is relevant, indicating the physical arrangement of the landscape produced by people, intentionally or not, and simultaneously related to both spatial perception and practice. In this sense landscape is the material outcome of a constant adaptation of our environment, a reflection of a socially produced spatial order, comprising a momentary synthesis of spatial design, spatial patterns of human behaviour and activities, as well as the blend of ideas, meanings, perceptions, attitudes and emotions about space. On the basis of the case *Buiten Wittevrouwen*, it is brought forward that changes in the spatial order – and consequently the transformation of the landscape – are often preceded by a transition in a wider social order.

### Continuity of a Spatial Order

The neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouwen* is named after the Premonstratensians, a conventual order consisting of women ('*vrouwen*') known for their white ('*witte*') habits. Their nunnery was situated inside the walls of the town of Utrecht. For centuries the area outside ('*buiten*') the 12<sup>th</sup>-century moat was kept vacant, mainly for reasons of defence. The grounds within the field of fire were used as vegetable gardens by local tradesmen. Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this spatial order was more or less permanent. In fact, the coherence between the function and fabric that defined the identity of this landscape was based on an institutional continuity, which had its origin in two constitutive episodes in the town's early history: the presence of the Roman castellum '*Traiectum*' (1<sup>st</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) and the Christianization of the Frisian and Saxon peoples by St. Willebrord, the first bishop of Utrecht (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). For a fairly long period, in the biographical approach often referred to as Braudel's time span of the *longue durée* (Kolen, 2004), the invariability of the spatial order was dictated to a high degree by institutions that represented military and religious interests. As a large landowner, the Catholic church played a vital role in the exploitation of the land. Land-use regulations and other decrees issued by the town council resulted in a clear distinction between town and countryside, not only

Figure 12.1 View on the Maliebaan



Etching of Casper Specht after a drawing of Jan van Vianen from 1697

Source: Het Utrechts Archief, catalogue number 30274

in its physical manifestation, but also in a legal, political, economic and cultural respect. In the personal experience, city gates in those days acted as a filter between two spheres (Van der Woud, 2004). A citizen that left the town by passing the so-called *Wittevrouwen* gate would find himself on a paved road (*Biltse Steenweg*), along which a small suburb had developed since the Middle Ages. Here, outside the gateway, where the legal authority of the city council was restricted, a parasitic conglomeration grew, including companies that eluded local acts and excises. A few hospitals offered lodging for travellers and other non-citizens of the city (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007).

Apart from the ribbon development along this arterial road, there was another particular feature in the – at that time – undeveloped area of *Buiten Wittevrouwen*, namely the *Maliebaan* (figure 12.1). In 1637 the city of Utrecht acquired a long strip (740 meters) of agricultural land and turned it into a playing field, as a gift to the newly founded university. Professors and students were allowed to play a game of pall mall ('*malie*') in the lane, which was planted with 1200 lime trees and 600 elms (Van Oudheusden, 1990). The upper middle class bought parcels bordering the leafy lane, initially as an investment, but after a short period ornamental gardens were laid

1 In French: *paille maille*, from which the English 'pall mall' was derived.



out as a place of repose. Tiny tea houses were built, deviating from the line of building, to grasp an extensive view on the grand lane. This practice was formalized in 1730 by deciding on two distinct building lines, one for lots and one for tea houses. As is apparent from the composition of the facade, a compound of mainly 19<sup>th</sup>-century mansions, many of them with bay windows overlooking the street, had an effect on future architectural decisions (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007). Hence, interpreted from a biographical perspective, ordinary conduct ('street gazing') clearly left an imprint on the landscape. Rules set to anticipate on evolved spatial practices structured new interventions.

### Transition and Transformation

From around 1850 onwards the neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouten* was gradually developed. The background of this transformation from a rural into an urban landscape lies roughly around the declaration of the Batavian Republic by Dutch patriots in 1795. When the former United Provinces became first a vassal state and from 1810 until 1813 an integral part of the First French Empire, a series of laws and regulations was implemented by the foreign ruler. At the same time steps were taken to create national uniformity and equality of rights by the introduction of a monetary union, a tax system, a legal system, levels of public administration and a central authority. According to Van der Woud (2006), normalization had a deep impact on the functioning of Dutch society as well as on the alteration of its landscape throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Actually, the institutional shift under French supremacy had two consequences for the designation and development of the area of *Buiten Wittevrouten*. Firstly, the dissolution of monasteries and the appropriation of ecclesiastical properties, as ordained by the French, led to the demolition of the last remains of the former Premonstratensian nunnery. The grounds fell into the hands of the municipality, which in 1824 decided to put up barracks on the property. The building of this military complex was part of the modernization of the Dutch defence system. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with support of the French authority, an ambitious plan was conceived by lieutenant-general C.R.T. Krayenhoff to create a line of defences to protect the core of Holland. From 1815 onwards, under the reign of King Willem I, this plan was carried out.

Lying inside the main defence line, Utrecht became exempt from its function as a fortified town in 1814 and became a garrison town, on the eastern

side flanked by fortifications of the so-called *Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie* (New Dutch Water Defence System). As a result the town was no longer kept to the straight jacket of the medieval walls. Already in 1826, Mayor Van Asch van Wijck appointed a committee to study the possibilities of urban growth. Although a consistent plan was presented by the celebrated landscape architect and garden designer J.D. Zocher Jr., the Belgian Revolution and cholera epidemics in the 1830s delayed the scheme (De Klerk, 2008). Eventually, only a park was realized, situated on the site of the pulled-down town walls. It was not until around 1850 that the first substantial building activities took place outside the walls of the old city (Renes, 2005). The area of *Buiten Wittevrouwen*, at that moment situated between the existing town and a newly built fortification along the *Biltstraat* (*Fort De Bilt*), no longer lay in a fire-zone. So secondly, as a result of a project initiated under French supremacy, a significant condition for change in the spatial order occurred.<sup>2</sup> The neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouwen* was one of the first new areas to be developed.

## The Process of Landscape Development

To recapitulate briefly, the case illustrates that both the invariability of a landscape as well as the occasion for its change are connected with the continuity and dynamics of a wider social order. Land-use decisions are bound by and shaped within the context of a variety of institutional structures – social, economic, political, legal – which in itself are subject to gradual and abrupt shifts in dominant values (De Klerk, 2008). Related to the consequences of this institutional embedding of the spatial order, two additional observations can be made which are relevant to a biographical approach. Firstly, the case reveals the geographic concept of openness, in the sense that it is not only the history of a place that defines its development through time. As geographer Doreen Massey has argued, regions and places are never closed entities (Cresswell, 2004). Unpredictable events may breach the path-dependence and cause ruptures in a settled spatial order. Therefore, one should always pay attention to socio-cultural, economic and political interaction and the resulting influences from outside on the development process of a landscape. Historical landscape research could

2 As Andela (1993, p. 184) indicates for Dutch cities in general, the implementation of the so called *Gemeentewet* (1851) and the abolition of local taxes charged at city gates and barriers (1864) were also vital conditions for urban expansion.

benefit from this notion of permeability that arises from the interconnectedness of places.

Secondly, the case urges us to think differently about landscape stratification. Apart from the existing notion of material accumulation over time, it seems relevant to conceive landscape as being part of different spatial levels at one and the same time. As is shown by the example of *Buiten Wittevrouwen*, the initial condition for the development of the neighbourhood was closely related to the realization of a large-scale defence project, stretching to a total length of 85 kilometres and covering five Dutch provinces. Also on the local level, an intervention at one place can lead to a series of small interventions, as was shown by the transformation of farmers' land into stately gardens after the construction of the *Maliebaan*. So, the distinct layers of time often discerned in biographical studies are in themselves not uniform of nature, but rather an abstraction of a complex process of intertwined activities and – as will appear from the following story lines – occasional affairs.

The next section turns to the embroidering character of the spatial development of *Buiten Wittevrouwen*. By looking at the growth process of this neighbourhood in some detail, it becomes clear that the urban fabric is neither the product of an elaborate plan nor the accidental outcome of a random process driven by anonymous forces. Instead it was produced in a fairly organic process by a collection of actors operating in a contextual and gradually changing framework of shared values and attitudes, existing spatial practices and formalized institutional structures. Apart from the influence of institutional frames and abstract socio-cultural relations on the urban design, the importance of ordinary behaviour and customs of people is raised by pointing out the effect of emerging recreational fashions on individual land-use decisions. This example brings up the trivial aspects about the development of landscape, a theme that will be explored in more detail below.

Apart from the altering interconnection between the design, use and mental aspects of landscape, the analysis of the growth process exemplifies that urban development in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not occur on a *tabula rasa*. The pre-urban landscape contained the potentialities that were incorporated into the new urban pattern. On the basis of an analysis of the cadastral map from 1832 – a system of land registry as introduced under the French administration and afterwards continued by the new Dutch state – it will be clarified that not the landscape itself but the existing spatial order structured the transformation.

## Framed Spatial Practices

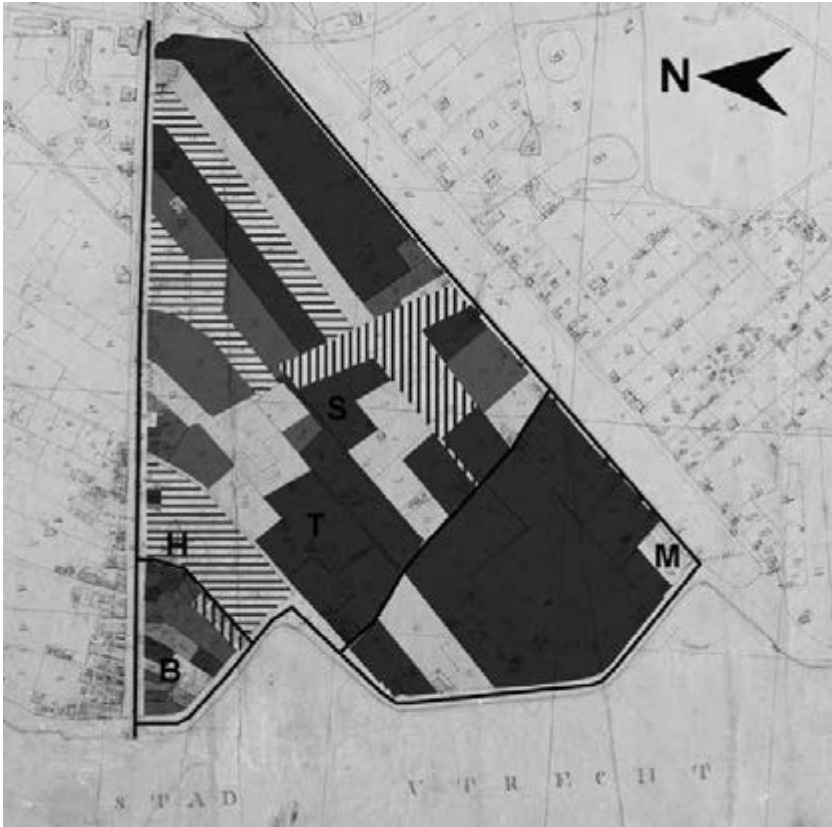
The neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevroutwen* was built gradually in the period 1850-1900. There was no plan underlying the lay-out. Systematic urban development became compulsory only after the ratification of the first Dutch Housing Act in 1901 (Van der Cammen & De Klerk, 2003). Prior to the introduction of a legal framework with regard to urban development, two major institutional shifts occurred in Dutch society during the period from 1850 to 1900 that affected building activities. First of all, doctrinaire liberalism evolved into social liberalism, and secondly compartmentalization along socio-political lines arose under the awakening of Christian-democracy (De Klerk, 2008). Nowadays, traces left in the spatial arrangement and appearance of *Buiten Wittevroutwen* still reveal the effects these socio-cultural transfigurations had on spatial practices.

## Spatial Development as Private Venture

Concerning the first shift, the development of liberalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can be noted that the role of private initiative was significant for the construction history of *Buiten Wittevroutwen*. According to the map titled 'Land Ownership' (figure 12.2), a substantial part of the land was owned by people from the middle and upper class. As was common during this liberal epoch, landowners sold parcels of land to speculators who in turn resold it to individual contractors. Moreover, with an almost standard regime of public tender, the lowest bidder frequently was awarded. To be competitive, contractors cut costs by using inferior building materials (Krabbe, 2007). This mode of 'speculative building' resulted in an incoherent urban pattern and a considerable number of workers' houses of poor quality. In 1868 a report of the local authority on the living conditions in Utrecht brought up the unacceptable circumstances in the expansion area *Buiten Wittevroutwen* (Van Oudheusden, 1990).

As has been reconstructed in an excellent way by spatial planner Len de Klerk (1998 & 2008), government intervention in different Dutch towns increased gradually around the turn of the century, as a result of the efforts of a small group of pioneers. From a shared complex of conceptions, convictions, attitudes and aspirations, they contributed individually and collectively to the introduction of both technical innovations and legal standards. It could therefore be asserted that most of *Buiten Wittevroutwen* was developed during a first phase of town planning, characterized by

**Figure 12.2** Land ownership – situation according to the cadastral map of 1832



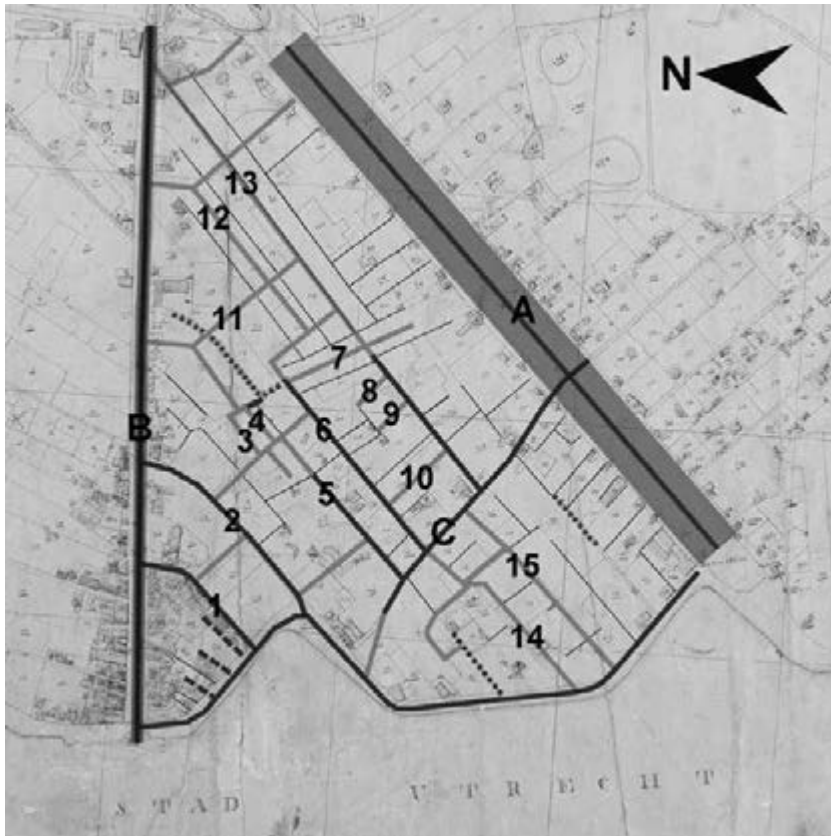
Catholic Church (horizontal stripe), Protestant Church (vertical stripe), upper-class (darkest tone), middle-class (dark tone), lower class (light tone) and farmers (lightest tone). The public roads (black lines) were the property of the municipality of Utrecht, except for the middle-lane of the Biltstraat which belonged to the State.

- B = Suburb along the Biltstraat
- H = Heilige Kruisgasthuis
- M = Maliehuis (property of the municipality of Utrecht)
- S = plot of Mrs. Speyaert van Woerden (Almshouses built in 1879)
- T = Park Tivoli

Source: Kadastrale Atlas Utrecht 1832 – Abstede sectie A blad 1, adapted by John de Jong

a budding institutionalization of existing practices in the field of urban development, nourished by experiences and new understandings. It was through their participation in public debate, their scientific contemplations and the introduction of foreign inventions that particular people made a vital contribution to this process. An article published in a local newspaper

Figure 12.3 Street pattern and field limits



This map displays the pre-urban structures as integrated and still present in the urban fabric of Buiten Wittevrouwen: road constructed prior to 1832 (thick dark line); small alley (chequered line); former road, route recognizable (dotted line) and field limit existing in 1832 (thin dark line). Several roads constructed after 1832 (thick light-coloured line) are situated in close cohesion with the parcellation existing at that time.

Street names: Maliebaan (A), Biltstraat (B) and Nachtegaalstraat (C), Gasthuisstraat (1), Kruisstraat (2), Moesstraat (3), Hovenstraat (4), Mulderstraat (5), Kerkstraat (6), Tulpstraat (7), Appelstraat (8), Thinsstraat (9), Kerkdwarsstraat (10), Deken Roesstraat (11), Adriaanstraat (12), Monseigneur Van de Weteringstraat (13), Schoolstraat (14) and Parkstraat (15).

Source: Kadastrale Atlas Utrecht 1832 – Abstede sectie A blad 1, adapted by John de Jong

confirms that the development of *Buiten Wittevrouwen* was at the time indeed the subject of public debate. The contributor (Broers, 1860) raised the question whether or not the municipality of Utrecht should draft a plan for such urban expansions. In line of the principles of classical liberalism,



he concluded that the costs of expropriation and the risk of speculation encompassed important obstacles for intervention.

While the development was carried out, the people involved responded to physical structures and elements already present in the landscape. Country lanes were upgraded to streets and consequently integrated into the new urban fabric of the neighbourhood. The map of the street pattern and field limits (figure 12.3), displaying a projection of the current location of roads on the cadastral map from 1832, shows that parts of the streets called *Monseigneur van de Weteringstraat*, *Kerkstraat*, *Kruisstraat* and *Mulderstraat* are aligned along the course of old country lanes. The same goes for the *Nachtegaalstraat* en *Gasthuisstraat*, although the latter was already a built-up street in 1832.

Apart from the corresponding location of roads, the relation between the street pattern and former field limits is striking. As is apparent from the oblique angle between the *Tulpstraat* and the *Monseigneur van de Weteringstraat*, road construction followed the earlier field pattern. The *Tulpstraat* was positioned along the central axis of an elongated lot, with buildings erected along both sides. The boundaries at the back of the building plots coincided with the long-standing property boundaries. This parcel-wise development, which is typical for the previously mentioned mode of speculative building, was also applied to the *Adriaanstraat*, *Kerkdwarsstraat*, *Hovenstraat* and *Moesstraat*. The eastern part of the *Monseigneur van de Weteringstraat* was positioned right on a field limit, as a continuation of an upgraded country lane at the western side. As a result, the size of the building plots was twice as big compared to those along the *Adriaanstraat*. Nowadays the urban landscape of *Buiten Wittevrouten* is still marked by a social gradient more or less in accordance with the measurements of the building plots: stately villas along the *Maliebaan*, mansions along the *Monseigneur van de Weteringstraat* and middleclass dwellings along the *Adriaanstraat* (figure 12.4). Working-class houses were located along the *Appelstraat*, *Moesstraat*, *Hovenstraat*, *Thinstraat* and the southern part of the *Tulpstraat*. These dead-end streets were constructed on small fields. The current street names refer to the use of these grounds around 1850 as orchards and gardens (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007).<sup>3</sup>

3 Appelstraat (Apple Street), Moesstraat (Fruit Purée Street), Tulpstraat (Tulip Street), Hovenstraat (Garden Street).



Figure 12.4 Adriaanstraat



The embroidering character of the development is still visible in the various construction heights.

### Socio-Politically-Based Development

Compartmentalization of society materialized in philanthropic housing construction and facilities. From personal engagement, wealthy individuals developed accommodation designated for members of a specific pillar of society. Already in 1749, Major Johan Breyer bequeathed to the Reformed Church a series of rent-free houses for poor people, located just outside the town's moat. After 1850, several almshouses were built in the neighbourhood by clerical foundations and philanthropists, a practice originating in the Middle Ages. The style chosen was a reference to the denomination: the neo-Gothic style was used by the Catholics, the neo-Renaissance style by the Protestants. With regard to the facilities it can be noticed that apart from a monastery, churches and community centres, quite a few schools were founded. These buildings also had a signature referring to the disposition of the awarding authority. Public schools, for instance, were built in a sober neo-classicist style that was characteristic for public works such

**Figure 12.5 Almshouses of Speyaert van Woerden**

The little pointed arches and the trefoiled decoration above the window refer to the Catholic background of the widow.

as railway stations, jails and pumping-stations during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

The number of Catholic boys' and girls' schools in the neighbourhood is remarkable. Again, the socio-cultural context gives an explanation (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007). The Catholic emancipation following the re-establishment of the Dutch episcopacies in 1853 led to a flourishing of faith-oriented education. The Education Act of 1857 made it possible to found a school for private education without governmental approval. A cluster of Catholic schools was located along the *Adriaanstraat*, *Pal-laesstraat* and *Deken Roesstraat* on grounds that – as appears from the cadastral map – were already the property of the Catholic Church. Apart from the institutional circumstances mentioned, a dean called *Th. S. Roes* (*“Parochiale scholen in de Adriaanstraat”*, 1912) played an important role in the bloom of Catholic schools in Utrecht. A memorial stone bricked up in the facade of a school in the *Adriaanstraat* testifies to his pioneering

4 In Dutch known as the *Waterstaatsstijl*, after the National Water Board, employer of engineers that acted as architects for many official buildings as well as buildings belonging to the 'official' Dutch Reformed Church (Volkers & Van Schaik, 2001).

work. Another example of the influence a single person had on this socio-politically based development of *Buiten Wittevrouwen* was a lady called Speyaert van Woerden. She died in 1874, being the last female successor of an old aristocratic family. In accordance with her wishes her bequest was partly granted to almshouses designated for Catholic widows (figure 12.5). The houses were built in 1879 on a piece of land that had belonged to the lady. The almshouses are a fine example of neo-Gothic architecture and echo the revival of craftsmanship at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Landscape for the Use of Leisure

It is not only shifts in the formal institutional situation that underlie spatial interventions at the local scale. Changes in habits and preferences in ordinary life equally have an impact on the development process of landscape. The influence of behaviour on land-use decisions becomes apparent from the way landowners in the area of *Buiten Wittevrouwen* adapted to altering modes of leisure. From 1860 onwards, numerous tea houses along the *Maliebaan* were converted into country houses and mansions. Furthermore, a number of societies, established after the latest fashion, settled with their club rooms along the avenue because of its grandeur.<sup>5</sup>

An exceptional phenomenon was Park Tivoli, situated at the *Kruisstraat*. In 1823, a public café was opened on this site by the theatre owner C. van Leeuwen. After he passed away, his neighbour professor Th. van Lidt de Jeude bought the area and started an amusement park, resembling *Jardin de Tivoli* in Paris (1795) and Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen (1843).<sup>6</sup> The enterprise would flourish around the turn of the century under the management of Abraham Johannes Aspoel. Park Tivoli remained a district of exposition and entertainment until 1929 (*De tuin van Tivoli*, 1929). After its closure and demolition the branches of amusement – including music, opera, theatre, dance and film – were scattered over the town.

Another development is related to the boom of cycling during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the period from 1880 until 1896, cycling was

5 In London a comparable development occurred in the district Westminster. Just like the *Maliebaan*, the street name Pall Mall refers to the game of *paille maille*, played at those grounds in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The small coffee houses along the lane were subsequently turned into clubhouses.

6 These amusement parks were named after the famous Tivoli near Rome (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007).

popular among wealthy young men. A British gentleman called Charles Bingham, who can be regarded as a cycling pioneer in Utrecht, founded the town's first bicycle trading company, *Simplex*, in 1887 (Kruner, 2012). Four years earlier he contributed to the founding of the Dutch association for cyclists (*ANWB*), which had offices at *Maliebaan* number 83.<sup>7</sup> By request of the forty-four members of this association – among them one woman – a path for the practice of *vélocipède* and the sport of cycle racing was constructed in 1885 on the western side of the avenue (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007). Around 1895, bike riding was so popular among the upper class that several cycle schools were set up in Utrecht, all of them situated in the neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouwen*. The firm of Mr. J.J. Goettsch, opened on 11 July 1896 at the *Biltstraat*, was the first to come into operation. Only four months later Mr. A. Vestdijk started his *Eerste Utrechtsche Wielrijkschool* at *Maliebaan* number 35.<sup>8</sup> This firm was incorporated into the company of Goettsch, followed by a move to the address of its former rival. Meanwhile two more schools were started: the firm of Willem Gerth in Park Tivoli (1897) and the *Simplex* cycle school at *Biltstraat* number 23 (1898). After 1909 the cycle schools faded away. Cycling was further popularized and consequently lessons were no longer considered necessary. Two cycle schools were converted into automobile companies (Kruner, 2012).

The fact that cycling became commonplace, was not just relevant for the emergence and disappearance of specialized companies. This seemingly insignificant change in customs had further consequences for the built environment, in the sense that the streetscape was gradually adjusted. In the final section the notion of the ordinariness of landscape will be further elaborated, emphasizing the importance of everyday practices.

## Iconography of the Landscape: A Dynamic Picture

Until now, the emphasis has been on the development process of the neighbourhood, linking the fragmentary growth of the urban fabric during the period 1850-1900 to evolving spatial practices and their social context. This third section explores some aspects of the mental dimension of landscape.

7 The *Nederlandsche Bond voor Vélocipèdisten* was renamed in 1885 as the *Algemeene Nederlandsche Wielrijders Bond* (*ANWB*).

8 The name literally means 'Firstly founded cycling school of Utrecht'. Actually, being the second company that was founded, this name seems to be incorrect.

The dynamics in symbolic representation will be elucidated by briefly reviewing the adaptation of the political meaning of the *Maliebaan*. The history of the lane as a contested landscape is outlined on the basis of a few prominent moments in time. As a counterpart, the second example focuses on more mundane ideas and feelings, by considering the expression of nostalgia in the urban landscape. With the focus on its volatile and superficial character, this example forms an introduction to the final section of this chapter, containing a plea to put into perspective the importance of identity and meaning, and to concentrate instead on the importance of daily practices and routines. By reviewing the development process of the neighbourhood from the perspective of personal conduct, the role of participation and performance for the perpetual becoming of spatial order is stressed.

### **Boulevard of Social Standing and Power**

Throughout the centuries, many renowned foreigners who visited Utrecht recorded their impressions. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a couple of French intellectuals were filled with admiration for the *Maliebaan*, which in those days was a unique urban phenomenon. Writers and philosophers like Diderot, Marquis de Sade and De Monconys considered the stately lane as an exceptional expression of culture. The philosopher and jurist Montesquieu visited Utrecht in 1729 and praised the *Maliebaan* as '*au-dessus de tout art*', literally 'elevated above all art' (Bulhof, 1993).

Apart from the status as a work of beauty, the lane's history is connected to its political meaning. After the capitulation of Utrecht in 1672 to the French army, the town was visited by Louis XIV. The lane made a deep impression on the Sun King, who according to oral tradition gave the order to move the trees of the lane to Versailles. In view of the political circumstances of the time, Louis XIV probably wanted to make a symbolic statement. Although his plan was never carried out, the quartered French garrison caused great damage by burning the woodwork of summer houses along the lane (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007). The arrival of Napoleon more than a century later resulted in the loss of the original function of the lane as a mall. On 7 October 1811, the French emperor took the salute of 25,000 soldiers. For this event the central track was paved, while the fences along the lane were removed (Heurneman & Van Santen, 2007).

Not only the association of the *Maliebaan* as a boulevard of power, but also the dynamic relationship of this more or less permanent meaning

**Figure 12.6** March-past of the National-Socialist Movement for the occasion of the birthday of leader Anton Mussert



Source: Het Utrechts Archief, catalogue number 97860

with changing social circumstances is illustrated by an event that took place in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1937 the headquarters of the National-Socialist Movement (NSB) moved to the address *Maliebaan* number 35-37 (Buitelaar, 2008). The headquarters of this political party, which collaborated with the German regime during the Second World War, was expanded by the acquisition of adjacent buildings. The establishment of several Nazi offices once more emphasized the reputation of the *Maliebaan* as a boulevard of power. Besides, several parades were held on the boulevard by the National-Socialist Movement before and during the war. For instance, a grand march-past was organized in 1941 for the occasion of the birthday of its leader Anton Mussert (figure 12.6).

On 7 May 1945, Utrecht was liberated by British and Canadian troops. Only two weeks afterwards, the *Maliebaan* was the scene of an episode that would rehabilitate the lane. Prince Bernard of the Netherlands paid a visit to the headquarters of the Dutch internal military services (*Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten*), located at *Maliebaan* number 15. The prince drove his car down the avenue, passing a cheering crowd. One could say by this act the lane was symbolically returned to the citizens of Utrecht.



Figure 12.7 Office of the assurance company 'De Nederlanden van 1845' in 1930



Source: Het Utrechts Archief, catalogue number 5043

## Progress and Nostalgia

On the released land of Park Tivoli premises were built in 1930, including shops, residences and the office of the insurance company *De Nederlanden van 1845*. The development was part of a process of city formation in Utrecht. On the authority of the municipality, the *Nachtegalstraat* was broadened because of increased traffic and upgraded to a multifunctional street (*'Onteigening te Utrecht'*, 1910). The new premises at the corner of the *Nachtegalstraat* and *Wittevrouwensingel* were built in an expressionistic architectural style (figure 12.7). The building plan suggests that the architects in charge – the brothers Van Gendt – took some advice from the famous Dutch architect H.P. Berlage (Van Oudheusden, 1990). In 1936 the building, par excellence a product of modernity, was transformed in a way that finely represents the ambivalent attitude towards past and present (figure 12.8). On the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the university the facade was temporally reconstructed into a medieval fortress, with battlements, turrets and heraldically painted shutters (*'Het derde Eeuwfeest Utrechtsche Universiteit'*, 1936). With this 'hypothetic landscape', created with the help of décor, the insurance company went along with the



Figure 12.8 The romantic décor in 1936 evoking nostalgia



Source: Het Utrechts Archief, catalogue number 4557

nostalgic sentiments of the population.<sup>9</sup> A peculiar thing about this staging is the inversion of both time and space. Precisely on the place that for ages was situated just outside the confines of the city, a provisional historical townscape was simulated.

### The Ordinarity of Landscape and the Importance of Everyday Practices

As already mentioned, landscape is a reflection of a spatial order. Figure 12.9 captures the idea that in addition to the transformation of the physical environment, the biography of a landscape is related to the active involvement of people with their surroundings (De Certeau, 1984). This photo compilation shows the location of the former Catholic girls' school along the *Adriaanstraat*. Except for the removal of a fence and the reshaping of public space, in general the built environment has barely changed. Time is tangible in the use of the built environment, as related to everyday practices of people. It is not only direct interventions in the designation and design

9 The term 'hypothetic landscape' derives from the dissertation *'De moderne historische stad'* (The modern historic city) of architectural historian and architect Paul Meurs (2010) and indicates the non-destructive manipulation of historical townscapes.

**Figure 12.9** Compilation of two photographs from around 1900 and 2010, showing the location of the former Catholic girls' school along the *Adriaanstraat*



Source: Het Utrechts Archief, catalogue number 3733, adapted by John de Jong

that contribute to the development process of landscape, but also the gradual modification of everyday practices. The relevance of ordinary human conduct for the perpetual conversion of the physical environment into a lived space is for instance underlined by the presence of bicycles and cars in the streetscape. As mentioned above, cycling was further popularized from 1900 onwards. It was not until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that driving a car was common. The bicycle stand (left in the photograph) and parking spaces demonstrate that through the years the public space was adapted to these customs.

The idea of spatial order has yet further implications for our conception of landscape. Following from the argument that space is socially reproduced (Shield, 1998) landscape can be defined as both the temporary outcome of past practices and the object of future practices in an ongoing process of 'transforming production' (De Jong, 2010). Personal performance is the propulsion of this process, generating a constant synthesis between physical environment, spatial patterns of human activities, and varied visions and sentiments about space.

A first consequence of this way of thinking is that even though landscape in a material sense may seem permanent, the associated patterns of use are by definition internally dynamic. Apart from obvious moments of creating, the persistence of the arrangement and appearance of a landscape is thus connected to human activities supporting the existing situation. It is here that the concept of 'structuration', introduced by the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984), is relevant. The structuration theory of Giddens focuses on the production and reproduction of social structures and systems. According to Giddens, both continuity and change of society are linked to an ongoing process, whereby social structures are both medium and outcome of day-to-day conduct of people ('agency'). As geographer Allan Pred (1984) already elaborated in his notion of 'place as a historically contingent process', the fact that social practices are both performed in and constitutive for an institutional context has implications for the development process of landscape. To put it concisely, the reproduction of social structures through localized practices is, according to Pred, a vital condition for the continuity of landscape. The biography of *Buiten Wittevrouwen* confirms this point of view. The described invariability of the spatial order in the period prior to the urban development was maintained by repetitive practices, for the most part trivial of genre. Farmers working their land, travellers and traders passing through via the *Biltstraat*, professors driving a boxwood ball along the course of the mall by swinging with their mallets.

A second consequence related to the notion of transforming production is connected with the openness of the development process of landscape. As Kolen *et al.* (2010) already argued, our environment is constantly given structure and meaning by social practices performed by people in day-to-day life. By referring to the concept of 'embodied space', and pointing to the parable between Giddens' 'agency' and the idea of 'ordinary practitioners' as put forth by De Certeau (1984), Kolen *et al.* underline the bottom-up nature of the continual reconfiguration of spatial order. This implies transformation is not always heralded by manifest shifts in the institutional setting. Neither is it inevitably a response to influences from outside or unpredictable events, nor exclusively the outcome of grand-scale interventions. Transformation also occurs gradually, as a result of evolving routine acts and the voluntary introduction of new customs. So in the long term, the same practices underlying the continuity of landscape contribute little by little to its development. In other words, transforming production means spatial order is never exactly reproduced.

A third implication is that not only substantial spatial interventions count. For example, practices in which landscape merely acts as a stage may eventually have an effect on the reshaping of the physical environment. In this respect the description of the way in which altering modes of leisure have left marks on the urban fabric of *Buiten Wittevrouten* is typical. Transformation meant a piecemeal adaption of the landscape, following collective fashions and personal taste. It could even be stated that space is primarily a commodity to accomplish non-spatial goals and that all spatial practices are intrinsically intertwined with social, economic or political practices. As was clearly shown in the case of *Buiten Wittevrouten*, speculative building had a profound impact on the realization of the neighbourhood. The organic development was driven by people who tried to make a living and acted according to dominant economic principles. The building activities were the outcome of manifold interactions between land-owners, speculators, contractors, bosses and craftsmen, each of them participating in the development to provide for day-to-day needs. Still today, the urban fabric carries the signature of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century liberalism, with small-scale and multiform construction reflecting a fragmented and incremental development process.

This brings me to the fourth and final observation, regarding the role of mental aspects. In line with the previous idea of derivative transformation, and given that acts in our daily life are to a fair degree performed from experience and based on intuition (Ingold, 2000), it seems sensible to question the intentionality of practices shaping the landscape. Of course it is already commonly accepted that landscape is never the exclusive result of

well-thought-out plans based on rational choices. However, the conception of landscape being gradually transformed by everyday practices in a perpetual process of social reproduction of space demands an appreciation of the imprint of personal participation and performance. Sheer coincidence, unintentional effects of conduct and even thoughtless behaviour have an effect on the development process of landscape. As becomes evident from the case, the maintenance and transmission of existing landscape elements due to a consciousness about its meaning – as often emphasized in discussions about heritage and landscape biography – should be put into perspective. Instead, more attention should be given to simple considerations concerning practical use. The persistence of field limits, for instance, was merely a by-product of dominant spatial practices. In fact, the composition of the neighbourhood – not only the spatial arrangement but also its social gradient – is more an embroidery than an expression of intended design.

By stressing the importance of participation and performance – even though often indirectly – the perceptions, attitudes, values and emotions of ordinary people are brought to the fore. A few examples discussed in the case of *Buiten Wittevrouwen* touch upon these mental aspects, though it is impossible to interpret the actual nature of these past performances from the outside. For instance, the bequest of Mrs. Speyaert van Woerden could be explained as an expression of disposition, but also as a personal longing to contribute to society out of charity grounded in faith. The same goes for the provisional conversion of the office along the *Nachtegaalstraat* into castle-like scenery. Apart from the fact that the décor was designed in honour of the town's university, the momentary expression itself probably had nothing to do with a deeply felt awareness of local identity, but rather with superficial feelings about nostalgia and space of time. On this point a parallel between décor and permanent constructions is not inconceivable.<sup>10</sup> Up until now the intentionality of spatial practices has been underexposed in discussions about the biographical approach. Supplementary to the focus on meaning, representation and identity in landscape research, a re-introduction of ordinariness as a theme implicates a descending to basal behaviour and sensations in everyday life.

10 From a perspective that takes the development process of landscape as a starting point, it could even be asserted that the attention for architectural style is sometimes over-estimated, while countless buildings are not so much comprehensively designed, but rather certain features are selectively copied after the latest fashion.

## Conclusion

Each landscape is connected to a multiplicity of personal life stories. To reconstruct a detailed landscape biography is therefore a tremendous chore, not to say an impossible one. A kaleidoscopic perspective accepts this restriction. By linking the general spatial development to both its contemporary social context and single examples of human conduct, it attempts to grasp not only a consistent picture, but also the peculiarities of a landscape's history. This perspective is especially appropriate to comprehend the process of landscape development itself.

By means of an analysis of the development of the neighbourhood *Buiten Wittevrouwen*, some basic assumptions regarding spatial transformations were explored that are also applicable to other types of landscape. A first observation was that the invariability of a landscape as well as the occasion for its change are connected with the continuity and dynamics of a wider social order. By looking closer at the development, it was argued that the urban fabric of the neighbourhood was produced in a more or less organic process by a collection of actors operating in a contextual and gradually changing framework of shared values and attitudes, existing spatial practices and formalized institutional structures. This finding underlines the significance of an awareness in landscape research of time-specific social rules governing human behaviour, for instance by taking into account the impact of legal conditions on land-use decisions, but also the specific personal motives for opening up new horizons.

Pertinent to biography of landscape is the idea of transforming production. To understand the gradualness of the process of landscape development, it is insufficient to examine only the manifest changes of the physical environment. Nor is a complete picture obtained by exploring only spatial practices. An adequate interpretation equally has an eye for ordinary behaviour and mental aspects. Since transformations derive from underlying changes in human activities and the other way round, people respond to changes in their environment, it is vital to consider the contemporary spatial order. This means applying a coherent approach of space, taking into account simultaneously spatial design, spatial patterns of human behaviour and activities, as well as the blend of ideas, meanings, perceptions, attitudes and emotions about space. Due to a constant interaction of those three dimensions, spatial order is intrinsically dynamic. Because spatial order is socially reproduced through time, temporality is a significant theme in the biographical approach of landscapes.

A final observation bears on the intentionality of spatial practices. As the shaping of landscapes is often highly connected to practical use, and furthermore voluntary transformation and transmitting both occur under the influence of everyday practices in a perpetual process of social reproduction of space, it seems sensible to supplement the dominant focus on meaning, representation and identity in landscape research and heritage studies by a renewed attention to ordinariness and a revelation of the impact of human participation and performance.

### About the Author

After his graduation at the department of Social Geography and Spatial Planning at Utrecht University, John de Jong has worked for several years in the field of heritage planning. At the same time he finished his second MA, in Heritage Studies, at VU University Amsterdam. His research interest concerns sociological and geographical perspectives on heritage and cultural landscape.

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# 13 The Cultural Biography of a Street

Memory, Cultural Heritage and Historical Notion of the  
Visserstraat in Breda, the Netherlands (1200-2000)

*Wim Hupperetz*

## Abstract

Presented in this chapter is a scheduling principle that can be used to improve the practical approach to cultural history. In short, it means operationalizing the three time levels of Fernand Braudel to form a conceptual-historical approach. The wealth of historical-cultural data can thus be arranged in a rather simple manner and opened up for architectural designers or town planners. The approach is illustrated by a case-study of the 800 year history of a single street: the Visserstraat in the town of Breda (the Netherlands).

**Keywords:** landscape biography, cultural biography, multidisciplinary research, historic city centre, Breda

## Introduction

The concept of cultural biography is applied to cultural landscapes and urban environments in order to get a grip on the complex and layered memory, stored in one way or another, linking spatial-physical environments and people, dead or alive. In my research I use the metaphor of *memory*, which focuses on the same aspects. A biography and a memory are similar, in that they are both linked to people and they reflect dynamic and cyclical aspects of the past.

This chapter presents a scheduling principle that can be used to improve the practical approach to cultural history. It is not a new principle, but the way it is applied can be re-evaluated. In short, it means operationalizing the three time levels of Fernand Braudel to form a conceptual historical approach. The wealth of historical-cultural data can thus be arranged in a rather simple manner and opened up for architectural designers or town planners. In my experience, contact between the domains of historical researchers and town planners is lacking, but this scheduling principle can be helpful.

In the first place, I want to discuss the possibilities and impossibilities that the current professional traditions of (historic building) archaeologists, historians, urban planners, architects and town planners bring regarding urban planning in a historic city centre. I will discuss this from the Dutch perspective in the context of the multidisciplinary study into eight hundred years of history of one street in the historical city centre of Breda.<sup>1</sup>

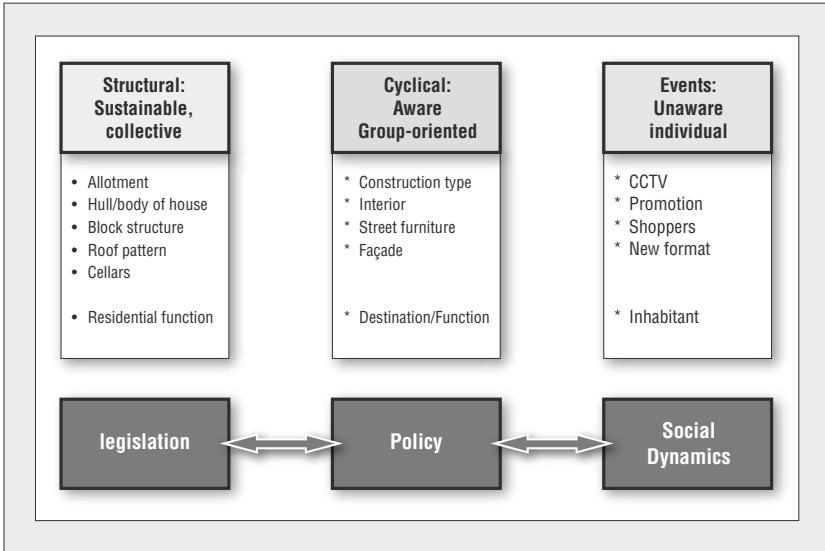
## Historical Research Traditions

The *memory of a street* is a metaphor I use for everything which has been stored in archives, in the ground, in houses, and in the people that can be related to human activity on a certain street; in this case, the *Visserstraat* in Breda (see figure 13.1). On the one hand, this may concern the socio-cultural developments, or the fact that the street, in the period from 1350 to 1590, was among the richest streets in Breda, or that the street became part of a district of cafés and discotheques after 1960. On the other hand, we see spatial-physical developments, including the petrification of the historical houses in the late Middle Ages, the growing density of construction from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, or the privatization tendencies which led to extra front doors for the apartments on the first and second floors.

This bipartition of socio-cultural and spatial-physical aspects has not been chosen accidentally; rather it coincides with two important research traditions that work on historical city centres. One tradition follows a group of historians and art historians who have, mainly on the basis of written sources, a particular eye for socio-cultural developments. The other tradition is formed by a group of (historic building) archaeologists and geographers, who focus more on the spatial-physical aspects and distil their conclusions from vestiges, archaeological remains, and traces (see figure 13.2). These two research traditions have to interact more within the field of the historical city centres and especially in the early modern period, where this combined approach can be very fruitful. Although historians do indeed use archaeological data, they frequently do so on a basic level without having the ability or skills to combine the sources in order to achieve added value. Alternatively, (historic building) archaeologists

1 This article is based on my PhD research (Hupperetz, 2004). I would like to thank C. A. Ray, MA for correcting my English.

Figure 13.1 A schedule on memory(loss), historic notion and commemoration



The sources of the existing memory can be used and interpreted in order to create a commemoration. The validation of this commemoration is closely linked with the different kinds of historic notion.

Figure 13.2 Archaeological research in the Visserstraat where the enclosure ditches of the different parcels from the 12th century were found



Photo: Bureau Cultureel Erfgoed Breda

still tend to use insufficiently historical concepts to reach syntheses, or they lack the possibilities and skills for combining historical data with their archaeological data sets or reports. In my own research, I have tried to combine these two approaches in order to show the added value of using a multidisciplinary approach (Hupperetz, 2010).

At present, the current academic organizations are not prepared for such research approaches and rarely offer a workable platform to carry them out. Real multidisciplinary research concerning historical city centres is still scarce and there is a significant need for training in this multidisciplinary approach; some recommendations follow at the end of this chapter.

### **The Historical City Centre as Playground for City Planners**

As if the problem of two separated research traditions is not yet enough, a second problem needs to be addressed regarding the *memory of a street*. This concerns the interpretation, translation, and applicability of the available data on historical city centres. Everyone knows that there are local archival specialists, historians, and archaeologists who represent their city or village in order to save important cultural heritage. The city planners, meanwhile, are working behind the scenes, more rapidly and efficiently, towards future developments. The main question is whether our historical-cultural analysis can be made applicable for and translated to the world of city planners and policy makers. Fortunately, the gap between historians and city planners is gradually getting smaller, but researchers of historical city centres, such as historians and (historical building) archaeologists, are still making analyses from their own professional traditions and historical perspectives, which often lack a more open dynamic heritage approach. As a result, the historical research continues to stand apart from present-day developments.

While ethnologists offer interpretation frameworks and concepts for incorporating contemporary history into historical research, there is still too little applied historical research in town planning. Few (academic) researchers succeed in translating their historical-cultural analyses into policy recommendations or into the practice of city planners or architects. This is where historians and (historical building) archaeologists should be more concerned. The social relevance of archaeological and historical research will, in the long run, be more related to the applicability and translation of research data. The recent policy on validation and dissemination of

academic work demonstrates this urge to bridge the gap between historians and archaeologists on the one side and town planners on the other side. The first group tends to look to the past, while the policy makers look ahead to the future. Although not every historian demonstrates this gap, many city planners consider historians as professional fanatics, losing themselves in details with an esoteric jargon. Within the framework of the Belvedere mission, 'conservation by development' is approached using communication, aiming at encouraging discussion between these two groups. This demands openness, curiosity, interest, and knowledge for each other's working methods, insights and traditions.

## Bricks and People

Let us return to the historical city centre where we will assume the perspective of the city planner, who finds it remarkable that the city is defined by the perception of public space. The urban structure of a historical city centre is characterized by streets and squares; spaces which delineate construction block systems. What is happening inside or between these construction block systems is not registered, however, and for centuries the organism of the city has grown here. The façades are, in many cases, just showing the architectural trends. Especially since the 1950s, the façade policy lacked the dynamic social-historical perspective and was stimulating the protection of monuments. In several more reflective studies concerning city planning and monument care, the socio-cultural perspective of the inhabitant is lacking almost completely (see De Klerk, 1980; Van Voorden, 1983; Heeling *et al.*, 2002 and Denslagen, 2004). Additionally, the debacle of the town renewal in the 1970s and 1980s have made clear how devastating this lack of social perspective has been (Pruys, 1974). A positive exception is a little cited overview work by professors in urban design, Kees Doevendans and Richard Stolzenburg (2000) and the work of their colleague Koos Bosma (2007; especially p. 424 ff).

From the domain of city construction and architecture – despite all good intentions – one does not look further than the façade. When a (historical) building block is torn down, there is a tendency to think that the memory is also lost: *tabula rasa*. That memory is, however, more than the built surroundings; it also includes, as it has already been defined, the whole of human activities and events which have been registered in written sources, as archaeological remains, or passed on in oral

traditions. If we return to the task of city planners, we see that they consider and develop a vision based on spatial structures, among other things, for historical city centres. They may or may not have a sensitivity for tradition and the location where they are working, yet city planners frequently have a hunger for historical (re)sources to inspire their new plans. From city construction and adjacent disciplines, such as historical geography and monument care, attempts are increasingly being made to address the complex historical structures as serious components of the design process in historical city centres and urban environments (see Bekkering, 1999; Taverne, 1989; Renes, 1999, especially p. 495 ff. and Van Dun, 1997).

On the other hand, a situation is growing in which architects and city planners make a call on ignorance; since everything was torn down, no history is left: *tabula rasa*. “Fuck the context,” as the famous Dutch architect, Rem Koolhaas, has been stating. His large-scale projects in China, and particularly in Beijing, where complete quarters the size of the city of The Hague have been torn down, show the rigorous renewal of large parts of a city centre. Koolhaas has already been called the ‘Leni Riefenstahl of the Low countries’.<sup>2</sup> The occurrence of rigorous interventions with restricted assessment indicates that one only looks ahead and that no consistency can be achieved between a site and its related memory. The architect is creating a memory from his own, mostly fantasized version of history, and yet this is referred to as ‘historical inspiration.’ This leads to an irrevocable discontinuity with the past, which may lead to anomalies or solutions that deny tradition, showing that choices were based not on structural aspects, but on the perspective of events. Too often this leads to spatial consumption and large-scale solutions that ignore the detailed complex structure of a historical city centre.

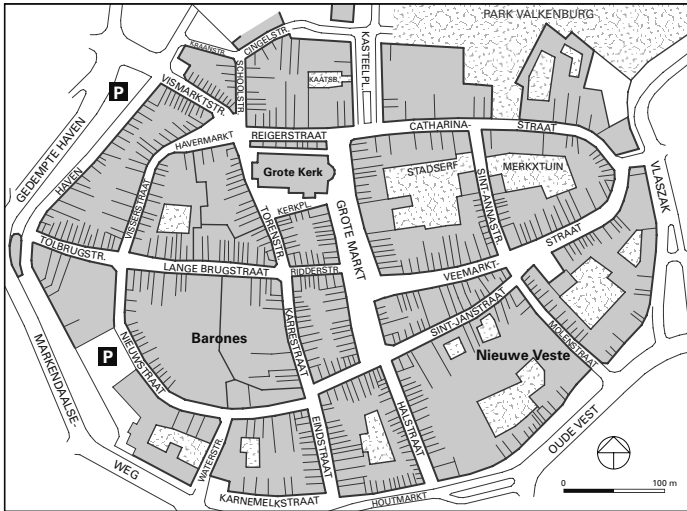
## Housing Culture, Parcels, Building Blocks and the Body of Houses

Within Dutch monument care, the complexity and detailed aspects of historical city centres received special attention at the time of town renewal in the 1960s. In practice, this meant that large parts of historical cities and villages’ historical façades could be protected. From 1961 there was the possibility of designating these protected urban and rural areas (Van

2 Typecasting by journalist Bernard Hulsman (NRC) in 2004.



Figure 13.3 Drawing and aerial photograph of the historic city center in Breda with the building blocks and large scale buildings at the Barones and Nieuwe Veste



Drawing Bureau Map, Bert Stamkot

Dun, 1997). In the 1970s, part of the Breda city centre was designated as protected façade. The term façade, however, already indicates a policy that was focused on the exterior of the building block, whereas the internal architectural structure of the building block was ignored (figure 13.3). It is

Figure 13.4a The cultivation phase 1175-1250

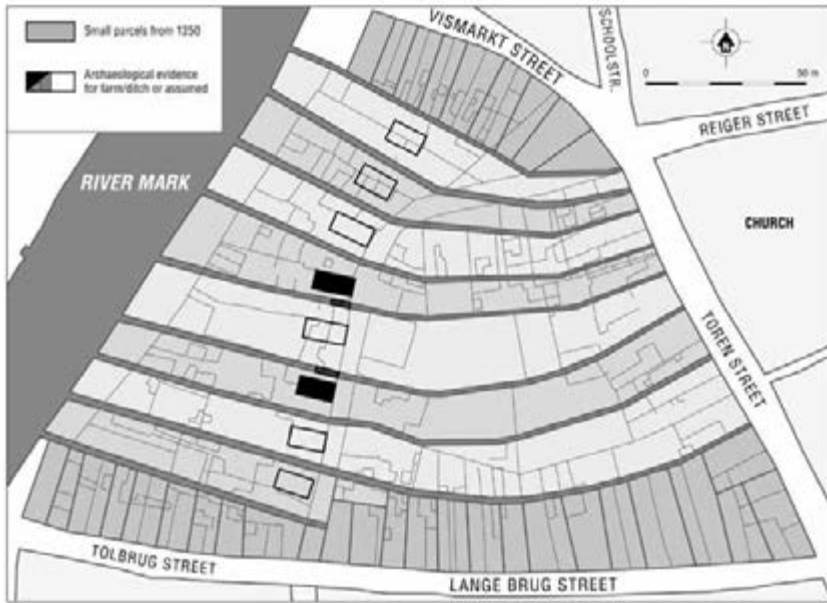


Figure 13.4b The land division phase and construction of the street in 1330



Figure 13.4c The parcels around 1435 with land consolidation at the Havermarkt

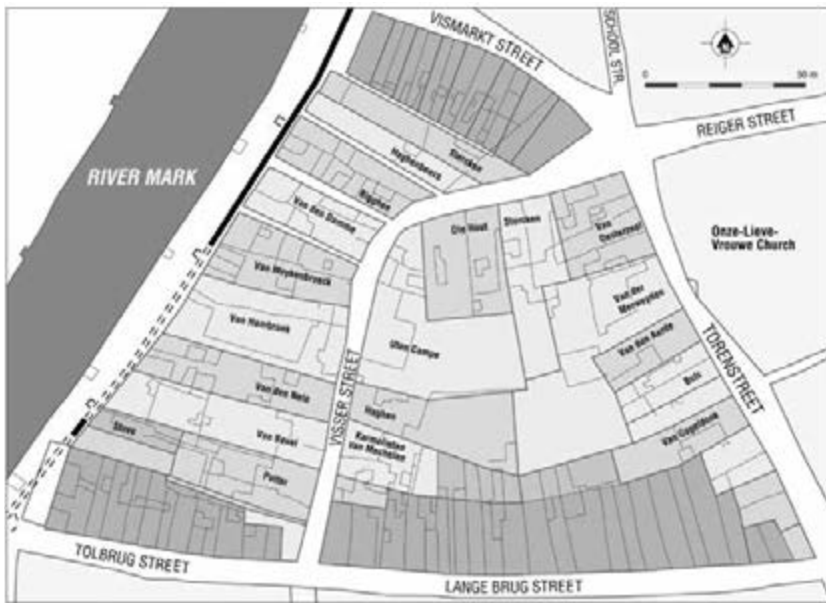


Figure 13.4d The Visserstraat after the cityfire in 1490 when the Havermarkt was constructed



The housenames at the Vismarkt date between 1520-1530. Drawing Bureau Map, Bert Stamkot

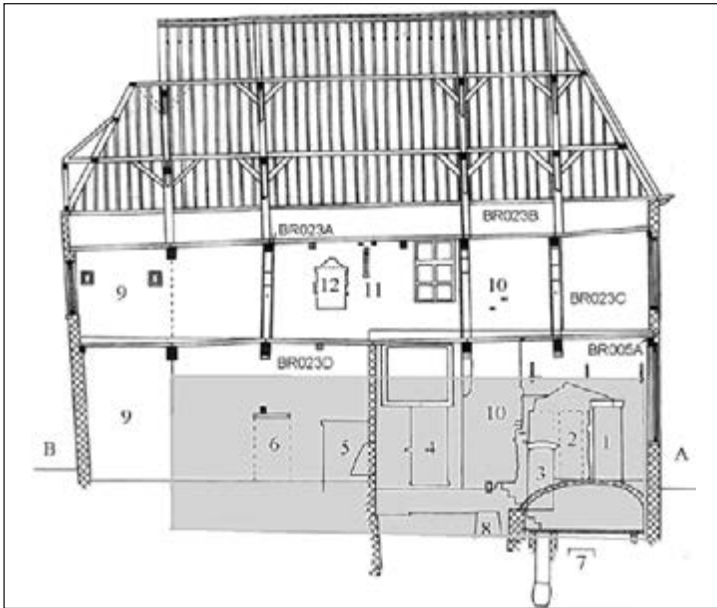
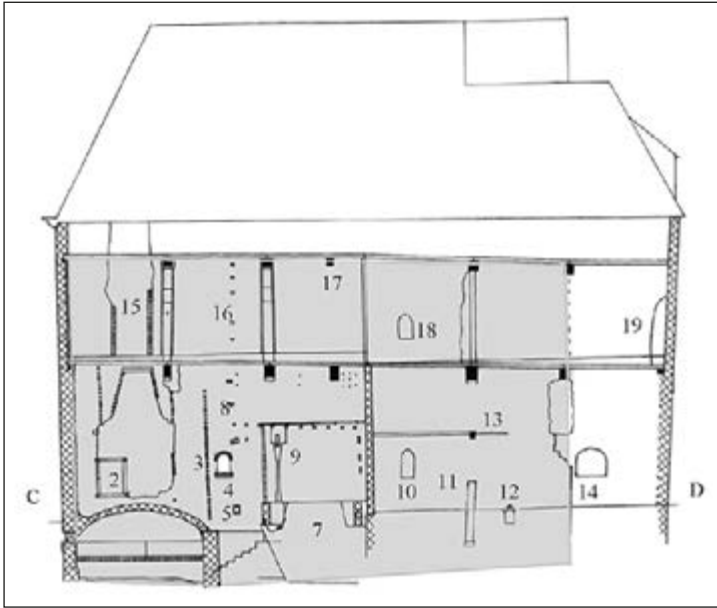
remarkable that the term 'building block' was not used in two important Dutch publications on city planning and urban design (Van Voorden, 1983; Van Dun, 1997).

The historical analysis of the *Visserstraat* in Breda makes clear that the permanent usage of the residences, the parcels (land lots), the body of the houses, and the system of building blocks are the most important structural aspects of the historic city centre (figure 13.4). All those centuries people have lived here; houses were built, arranged and inhabited. The housing culture and the identity of this street have thus been founded on this primary element. The design of the houses on the *Visserstraat* was stipulated both by technical possibilities and the availability of certain construction materials. The danger of devastating fires and the increase in the production of bricks changed the architectural set-up and, with that, also the way construction work was organized in the 14th and 15th century, and certainly after the big fires of 1490 and 1534. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the construction tradition changed once again and we see the transition from brick to more rigorous construction materials, such as steel, aluminium, and plastic casings. Materials become cheaper compared to labour, and more often it is cheaper to demolish and rebuild than to re-use an existing construction. The shift in materials also changes the volumes and therefore the internal structure of a house, thus also influencing the housing culture.

## Structure

Much has changed since the construction of the *Visserstraat* around 1315; when the parcels (land lots) were created and then houses were built between 1450-1850. This is still the basis for the spatial framework of the *Visserstraat*. Instead of houses, we will speak about the body of houses (figure 13.5), because the interior and the façade of the houses – under the influence of architectural trends – change constantly. Those changes can be carried out quite easily within the main structure or body of the house. Sidewalls and the façade at the back, the cellars, the beam layers, and roof constructions were, for centuries, the starting point for new architectural plans. The building blocks were an important organizing principle of urban development in the late medieval city and also symbolized the core antagonism in public and private, outside and within. Certainly, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but probably already earlier, the building blocks were closed around the *Visserstraat* with façades and walled courts. It is important

Figure 13.5 The body of the medieval house Visserstraat 31 in Breda



View of the sidewalls; indicated in grey are the parts that date before the cityfire of 1490. BR-code indicate the dendrochronological samples.  
Drawing author

to note that modern urban planning often results in the dismantling of building blocks, with the aim of eliminating the closed façade and creating a more open-city perspective.

The building block concept around the *Visserstraat* has three important spatial characteristics. First, the borders of the different parcels (land lots) still refer to the main classification from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, before the street had been planned. Secondly, the construction of the street, the town wall, and the market stipulated the border of the building block. As the third element, the body of the houses, as far as still present, reflects the skeleton of the organically grown city. Those three main principles, which still exist today, visualize the continuity of this site and deserve to be used and appreciated in urban planning and development as a durable memory.

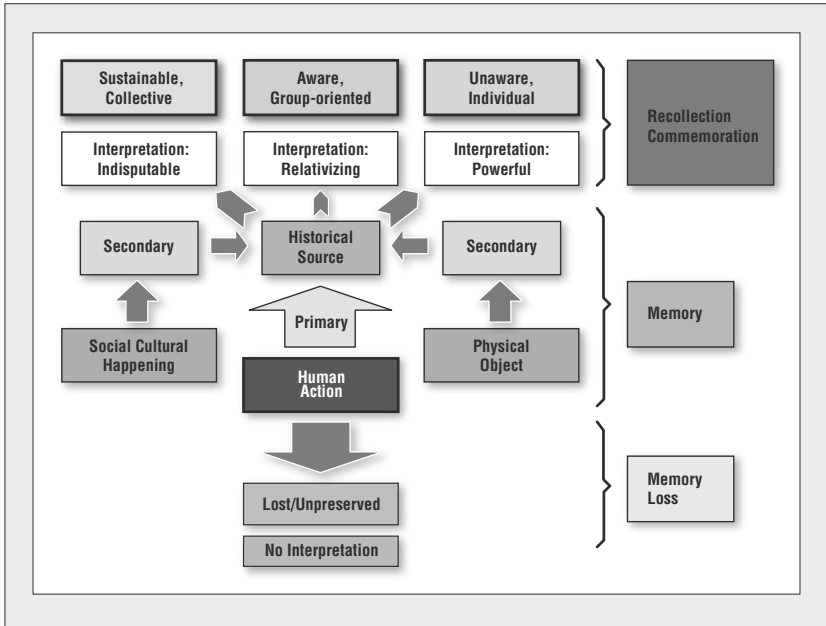
### Historical Notion

To appreciate and protect does not mean to suspend or to restore. Each attempt to do this goes against the dynamic culture of a street or a historic city centre. But how or what to appreciate? The main point from the analysis I have made is a threefold perspective related to everyday events, cyclical developments and structural aspects, as defined by Braudel (Braudel, 1979, p. 45-84; see also Jonker, 1996, p. 30-46). By using this division, these three time levels can also be linked with three different ways of historical notion (figure 13.6). Using several time layers is not strange, since each historian does this by definition, although not everyone is consciously aware of it. The moment historical sources are consulted or arranged, historiography rises and gives the sources and interpretations a new presence within the newly written historical setting. On one hand, there is the time layer of the objective chronology and facts – that happened then, there – which, on the other hand, receives a place within a new arrangement of facts. It is this last arrangement that leads to the shaping of its own subjective time layer with its own meaning.

The evenemential and unconscious direct historical memory can be paired with strong, individual appreciation. We want to put cyclical developments into perspective and the historical notion coupled there is arranging and relativizing. This leads to a certain notion of group identity. The structural aspects have a durable and collective character related to historical notion – this is frequently seen referred to as indisputable cultural heritage, to indicate the importance (Jansen, 2003, p. 526-527).



Figure 13.6 A schedule with structural, cyclical and evenemential aspects that can be distinguished in the eight hundred years of living in the Visserstraat in Breda



### Dynamic Cultural Heritage

But what is cultural heritage about? Cultural heritage is not inheritance which ‘is just happening’; instead, it is the result of active decisions made by a group of individuals about what they think is culturally important and what they want to keep and transfer to next generations, for personal, social, political and economic reasons. Cultural heritage is that which is kept and becomes part of our individual and/or collective memory. Nothing is born as cultural heritage; objects must come to be considered as cultural heritage by a larger or smaller group that desires to transfer this to the next generation. Cultural heritage provides (regional) meaning and a sense of belonging, particularly in times of globalisation. Moreover, heritage has perceptible appreciation in terms of quality of living and environment. Cultural heritage makes a substantive contribution to the planning of the public space and makes citizens aware of pluralism, authority, and authenticity. In a changing world, heritage is also dynamic and changing.



In fact, cultural heritage can be seen from three different perspectives in time (Frijhoff, 2007; Holtorf, 2010):

1. Cultural heritage as a reservoir or stock (frequently uncultivated and autonomous) from a retrospection;
2. Cultural heritage as a reflection on our identity, here and now;
3. Cultural heritage as an inspirational source for creativity and a start for future plans.

These three perspectives are bound together and have to be in balance. Without a reservoir, there will be no reflection, and without reflection, there will be no inspiration. Past, present and future cannot exist without each other; it is as simple as that. This concept of dynamic heritage is connected to the three time levels in the sense that we can classify aspects of the cultural analysis and try to valorise them in order to be aware of the different perspectives we are using.

## **Tradition and Renewal**

How do we deal with the past and with the cultural heritage of a street? A vital antagonism is, of course, that between tradition and renewal. In the past hundred years, tradition has been less dominant, while renewal seems to have become more important and has a higher frequency. In short, the past loses importance as an obvious precedent, and thus, respect for that past is no longer automatic (Perry, 1999, p. 111). Renewal after World War II and the subsequent cleansings in the third quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the consequence of a 'positivistic vision', the rather dramatic demographic forecasts, and modernism. In city planning, the conflict between tradition and renewal has been considered since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Important questions which return each time address functions (where, which facilities?) and spatial usage (where are the borders of spatial consumption?).

A fundamental question is whether the change of a new building, or a new function, is worth giving up certain cultural-historical values. It concerns the appreciation of 'existing' with respect to 'new'. Renewal is mostly seen from a progressive perspective, leading to the tendency for intensification of spatial usage in city centres (Denslagen, 2004, p. 145, 151 and 153). Space in a city is scarce by definition and this automatically leads city planners to an intensification policy, as if they fear the vacuum. A deep respect for tradition within architecture and urban planning has arisen in

the 19th century. Leading men in Dutch society Pierre Cuypers and Victor de Stuers, who were fed by the romanticism of the past, were trying to translate this to have national meaning and content. As a result, De Stuers was able to found a national monument policy (Perry, 2004). It was a response to the tempestuous rise of the modern industrial society, in which old traditions and buildings were rapidly disappearing on a large scale. The credo was mostly 'save what we can save.' In respect to the architecture, this led to the so-called neo-styles, where the longing for tradition is clear. It is, in fact, a historical architecture inspired by a strong historical imagination and the urge to link the present to the past. But this was certainly also the birth of monument care in the Netherlands. It was a romantic ideology that wanted to revive the past, but with anachronistic resources. It is understandable that monument care is still closely connected with this tradition in many respects. Conservation before renewal became the motto after the new monument law of 1961. Development is a difficult paradigm for monument care, as shown by a quotation of Kees Peeters from 1978: 'Restoring is changing and is therefore certainly not the first incentive of the monument care that should always try to keep and conserve historical values' (Denslagen, 1997).

As close as architects like Cuypers or Viollet-le-Duc and their architectural colleagues were with 19th-century monument care, their relation became distant over the course of the 20th century. Recent research made clear that both Cuypers and Berlage were very traditional in their architectural vision and both were mainly looking backwards (Van der Woud, 2008). Nevertheless, there was a movement of modernistic architects with a strong reaction to traditional architecture, who strongly tried to oppose the 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition. From the idea that the future is more beautiful than the past, one strives for renewal, and this created the New Objectivity (*Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*). According to this modernistic wave, neo-styles were seen as banal, anachronistic kitsch. But eventually these modernistic architects and city planners also wanted to pursue a fantasy (of a rational order). Moreover, this rational order is now disputed in the same way as the urge for tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was by their predecessors (Denslagen, 2004).

## Recommendations

If we count the aforementioned gaps and shortages, there is too little attention from both sides for 'a total of objects and events of acting people

at the level of the historical city centre.' Even if a house, a street, or a building block is demolished, and even if the occupants have moved or died, then there is still a memory that can be the start for a new memory linked with this site, that house, or building block. The strange thing is that archaeological traces, which are generally destroyed to accommodate a new construction plan, can show this very concretely, whereas historical sources often remain invisible. The appreciation of multidisciplinary study into a historical city centre has been specifically presented with a link between research of spatial-physical aspects on the one hand, and, on the other, socio-cultural aspects. By applying a long-term perspective, the layering and stratification emerges and the different speeds of processes become apparent. Furthermore, the step between research and design must receive more attention.

The most important recommendations are simple and focus on two things. In the first place they concern professionals, both from the world of historical research and from city planning, who have to discuss tradition and renewal in a historical city centre. With that, it is vital that the spatial-physical aspects and the socio-cultural aspects are combined, as they cannot exist without each other. Naturally, this will demand much of researchers and of designers, but also more attention in existing training and education programmes.

In the second place, the discussion must also receive a formal context. In my opinion, this is possible through incorporation into the planning process. A cultural-historical paragraph should be linked with the relevant historical-cultural research – in analogy and with the current Dutch archaeological legislation, this multidisciplinary research must also have a legal basis.

### About the Author

Wim Hupperetz (1966) studied Ancient History and Provincial Roman Archaeology at Radboud University (Nijmegen); in 2004 he defended his PhD thesis, a multidisciplinary research project called *The Memory of a Street* at Tilburg University. He was curator in the Limburgs Museum for 16 years and since 2009 he has been director of the Allard Pierson Museum, the archaeological museum of the University of Amsterdam.

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# 14 Post-Industrial Coal-Mining Landscapes and the Evolution of Mining Memory

*Felix van Veldhoven*

## **Abstract**

In this chapter an attempt is made to link theories on social memory to the post-industrial coal landscapes of Dutch and Belgian Limburg. The focus is on the interface between the ideas about remembering and forgetting on the one hand, and the specific case studies of the mining districts on the other. The first section of this chapter describes the notion of 'formative forgetting', which appears to be very useful for the study of mining heritage. After describing the diverging nature and extent of mining heritage preservation, it is stated that we need to consider a new factor, the so-called 'evolution' of memory, when we discuss heritage.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, mining heritage, remembering, forgetting, Dutch Limburg, Belgian Limburg

## **Introduction**

The landscape tells – or rather is – a story. It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past (Ingold, 1993, p. 152).

In his *Snail and Snail Shell: Industrial Heritage and the Reconstruction of a Lost World* (2004), historian Erik Nijhof describes how all traces of the past have disappeared in the former mining district of Dutch Limburg. The era of coal mining appears to be no more than a transitional phase within Dutch economic development. The author argues that Dutch society seems eager

to forget its mining past, especially when compared to Belgium or Germany. This appears to be a leaving behind of a 'world we have lost', a 'trauma' of the coal. Hardly anything of the once all-embracing industry has survived. Under the idyllic motto 'from black to green', remnants like head frames, spoil heaps, winding towers, engine houses, offices, workshops and mine tracks were swiftly and efficiently removed from the landscape.

In this chapter an attempt is made to link theories on social memory to the post-industrial landscape of coal districts. In which way can the ideas on remembering and forgetting be tied to landscape and which explanations can this connection provide to understand the changing appreciation of former coal-mining landscapes? By comparing two post-industrial coal-mining districts (Dutch Limburg and Belgian Limburg), the present study attempts to answer this question. It is stated that linking the ideas of remembering and forgetting with former mining landscapes exceeds the domain of industrial heritage, and can be employed for other forms of 'painful' heritage, such as remnants of the Second World War. 'Painful heritage' can be described as heritage that is burdened by the past. See for example the different types of 'dissonant heritage', as described by John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth in their influential *Dissonant Heritage: Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (1996), or the more recent work on 'difficult heritage' (e.g. Logan and Reeves, 2009; Macdonald, 2009).

Within the international dissemination of cultural heritage, memory has become a key concept. Heritage has changed into a theme park of memory. Spectators are invited on the rollercoaster of the interpretation, in which the experience of interpretation has soared beyond the interpretation itself. By embracing the concept of heritage, we have condemned ourselves to a new approach to reality in which the material remnants of the past cannot be separated from remembering and forgetting, but form the kaleidoscopic experience of the past.

Heritage can be interpreted by both essentialists and constructivists, and therefore has become 'uncontrollable'. The heritage cult has left us with a Trojan horse, of which we increasingly face the consequences. The concept of the 'landscape biography' (Kolen, 2005) can be seen as a theoretical outcome of the concept of heritage. By linking the ideas of remembering and forgetting to mining landscapes, this chapter attempts to contribute to the aforementioned outcome. Within this attempt, the theory in the first part of this chapter must be seen on the same level as the materiality, i.e. the tangible remnants of the mining era in the Netherlands and Belgium, in the second part.



## Remembering and Forgetting in the Landscape

If a child's vision of nature can already be loaded with complicating memories, myths and meanings, how much more elaborately wrought is the frame through which our adult eyes survey the landscape (Schama, 1995, p. 6).

Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1995) describes how social memory can survive for generations by the grace of objectified culture. According to Assmann, the structure of objectified culture and memory are of the same kind: from both, groups (as defined by Halbwachs, 1980) borrow community-forming impulses that enable these groups to reproduce their identity and cultural practices. Historian Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* (1984) has had a major influence on approaching familiar places as carriers of memory. Art historian Kirk Savage builds on Nora's ideas when he states that both 'internalized' forms of remembering (like a reunion of war veterans) and 'external' remnants (like memorials or archives) can be seen as mutually reinforcing (as cited in Robertson & Hall, 2007, p. 22). Cicero once described this connection as the scratching of a stylus on a wax tablet. Mental images and place together create memory, just like the scribble and the wax tablet together form a message. Place and memory are condemned to each other; a memory will last when it is connected to a place.

In this unique world, everything sensuous that I now originally perceive, everything that I have perceived and which I can now remember or about which others can report to me as what they have perceived or remembered, has its place (Husserl, 1997, p. 163).

In his phenomenological study *Remembering* (1987), philosopher Edward Casey approaches this subject matter by describing the so-called 'intrinsic memorability' of place (p. 186). Memory and place provide a fusion of unlike objects and form a temporary unity. A place forms a solidified scene for remembered content and situates our memories. As Husserl describes in the above quote: 'Everything (...) has its place'. In Casey's view, the 'intrinsic memorability' of place stems from the resemblance in functioning of place and memory. There seems to be symmetry: place and memory respectively merge living environment and time, in a similar way. Philosopher of history Frank Ankersmit (2002) states that the strongest and most reliable support for a memory is to be found in the association with a particular place. By way of illustration, he quotes the much-used phrase: 'Where were you when

you heard about Kennedy's assassination?' The particular place we were in during that moment (or, for example, during the attack on the Twin Towers) seems to be just as important as the memory of the historic events itself.

The observation above can actually be demonstrated, as described by historians Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (1999). Students who were subjected to a test achieved better results when the examination was held in the same *place* as where they had learned the subject matter. Apparently, a place can call up memories of events that happened at the same location. One can hardly overestimate the consequences of the above for heritage, defined as the material and immaterial past we value and use in the present. Heritage may function as an anchor, as an *aide-mémoire*, and can call up strong, personal memories.

For Casey, landscape is the most encompassing and expansive form of *place*. Landscape is part of our being and our perception of it, as a living process and ever-unfinished construction, can be seen as a way of remembering. This does not mean that memory can actually be 'grounded' in the landscape. Apart from everything else, the process requires people, who maintain shared mental images as a collective memory. Within this process, the landscape operates to anchor memories, because of its inherent *variegation, sustaining character* and *expressiveness* (Casey, 1987). Landscape can serve as a mnemonic device.

'Preserve a steel mill?' people say, 'It killed my father. Who wants to preserve that?' (Robert Vogel, as cited in Shackel, 2004, p. 44).

The literature on collective memory may seem like a rapidly rising river, of which the subject of forgetting appears to be a relatively young branch (e.g., Forty, 1999; Carsten, 1996; Connerton, 2008). Little has been written about this matter and the following, about the relationship between landscape and forgetting, can be seen as a careful attempt.

The previously cited philosopher Ankersmit (2001) states that forgetting can have a formative character and may therefore be placed alongside, rather than opposite, remembering. Ankersmit describes the following paradoxical form of forgetting: a painful, traumatic experience, or period in someone's life, can be both forgotten and remembered, 'by relegating the traumatic experience to the domain of the unconscious, we can, indeed, forget it. But precisely by storing it there, we will *also* retain it as an unconscious memory. As an unconscious memory it is a constant reminder that there is something that we should or wish to forget' (2001, p. 300). By way of illustration, he describes the Death of God, the French and the Industrial Revolution. In these cases, there appears to be a 'leaving behind' of an old identity and the entering of a new world. Thereafter, the left identities are carried forth by man, like

wounds, a phenomenon which Ankersmit calls the ‘pain of Prometheus’: it is a situation in which ‘a civilization is permanently aware of the social idylls of the “lost worlds” that it was forced to surrender in the course of its long history, and that will never be returned to it however strong the nostalgic yearning for these lost paradises may be’ (Ankersmit, 2001, p. 302).

It is stated that the process described above applies very well to the end of coal mining. The notion of ‘formative forgetting’, as one can put Ankersmit’s paradox, seems to be applicable to explaining the development of mining heritage. The ‘pain of Prometheus’ may be employed as an explanatory idea for the revaluation of mining heritage in both investigated areas.

To be able to close a traumatic period, to be able to *forget*, one first needs to remember. In German there is a word for sorting out the past: *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In her book *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (2005), Karen Till speaks of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in an analysis of the confrontation with and overcoming of the National Socialist past in Germany. Coping with a loss, or leaving behind the traumatic closing of the mines, requires a period of hyper-remembering (Clewell, 2004). It requires the admission of what is forgotten into one’s own identity. Within this context, remembering and forgetting can be approached as two twisted aspects of social culture. Landscape is the objectified result of the daily struggle about what is to be remembered and what forgotten. This functioning as a mnemonic device means that an erasure, for example, by the complete destruction of a mining landscape, will sooner block a successful forgetting than precipitate it. The mining landscape as a whole, consisting of slag heaps, engine houses and pit heads, has a use in the closing of a traumatic mining era. Memory, with both the faces of remembering and forgetting, is closely knit to the landscape in which we find ourselves and which grants us, as an *aide-mémoire*, the possibility to renew and perpetuate our collective memories.

### The Post-Industrial Mining Landscape of Dutch and Belgian Limburg

The first reaction in the period following the closure of an area’s mines is to erase all traces of the past, to eliminate the old landmarks and the scars on the landscape and, as far as possible, to return to the natural landscape of the pre-industrial stage (Jansen-Verbeke, 1999, p. 70).

Thus, the ambivalent character of the coal industry is described. In the heyday of the coal mines, black gold blessed the formerly isolated mining regions with

economic growth, prosperity, employment and prestige. With the transition to the post-industrial period, however, those same regions faced a dead-end situation of merciless unemployment, poverty and social problems. As sociologist Bella Dicks (2008) puts it, the sudden change leaves former mining communities sandwiched between the periods of mining and post-mining. Pit heads, slag heaps and miners' cottages may function as mnemonic devices for memories people sometimes prefer to forget: 'Elements of the physical landscape [...] evoke memories of hard work, community and resistance to exploitation to some, while for others they represent a past much better forgotten' (Abrams, 1994, p. 29). Many workers of the former coal industry identify the period of the mine closures first of all with health problems and unemployment. Preservation and remembrance does not necessarily have to be a community's priority; see also the contributions in Häyrynen, Turunen & Nyman (2012) on the cultural consequences of changes in single-industry communities.

Two post-industrial mining regions were analysed for this chapter: Dutch and Belgian Limburg. The nature and extent of mining heritage preservation differ significantly. Some of the coal mines were almost fully removed from the landscape, as if the vast influence of the coal had never existed. Other mines still show most of their steel constructions, slowly perishing and rusting away, and allow visitors to experience the functioning of a mining landscape, including integrally-preserved mining villages, offices and slag heaps.

## Dutch Limburg

The shafts are sealed, the surface structures demolished, the mine terrain has been built over and the slag heaps are levelled or overgrown. The large, underground mine is destroyed by nature, drowned in groundwater, compressed by subterranean pressure. What remains is memory (Messing, 1988, p. VIII, translation by author).

Earlier in this chapter an attempt was made to point out that a memory does not just take root. Memories are interwoven with place and people and last as long as there is an active exchange between both. In Dutch Limburg, not only the mine shafts and chimneys have been dismantled, but entire mining landscapes have been erased. What remains is forgetting, one might say. With striking speed, nearly all references to the extraction of coal were removed from the Limburg landscape. The last coal mine, i.e. the *Oranje-Nassau I*, ceased production in 1974, and already in 1978 there was not a single place left where one could come across a coherent whole

of slag heaps, mine structures and miners' cottages (Hofstee *et al.*, 1978). The industrial monoculture, which blossomed for roughly 60 years and provided a living for one third of the South-Limburgers in its heyday, lost its tangible legacy in a mere 15 years (for detailed studies see, e.g. Peet & Rutten, 2009; Wind, 2008). Erasing the grey mining structures would give renewed courage to the deprived region. The demolition, later known as the operation 'from black to green', was led by the engineer H. Hoefnagels. Tangible mining memories were torn down to establish space for new economic activity, living and recreation areas. 750 hectares of mining terrain received a new destination and the demolishing activities were completed within a decade.

**Figure 14.1 Mining heritage in the Netherlands**

Name	Concession	Active	Shafts	Preserved?
<i>Oranje-Nassau I</i>	Private	1899-1974	3	Fully demolished, except for one head frame. A residential area was built on top of the slag heap.
<i>Oranje-Nassau II</i>	Private	1904-1971	2	Nowadays a residential area. A horse race track was built on top of the slag heap.
<i>Oranje-Nassau III</i>	Private	1917-1973	1	Nowadays a residential area. Slagheap was changed into a walking park.
<i>Oranje-Nassau IV</i>	Private	1925-1966	1	Best preserved, but threatened slag heap.
<i>Laura</i>	Private	1905-1968	2	Nowadays a residential area.
<i>Julia</i>	Private	1926-1974	2	Nowadays an industrial area. Some remains of the slag heap are still visible.
<i>Willem-Sophia</i>	Private	1902-1970	5	Hardly anything preserved. Slag heap was levelled for road construction.
<i>Domaniale</i>	Lease of the State	1815-1969	6	<i>Nullandschacht</i> has been preserved. Remains of the slag heap now form a walking park.
<i>Wilhelmina</i>	State	1906-1969	2	Slag heap was remodelled into an indoor ski run.
<i>Emma</i>	State	1911-1973	4	Nowadays a residential area.
<i>Hendrik</i>	State	1915-1963	4	NATO base. Slag heap almost completely levelled.
<i>Maurits</i>	State	1926-1967	4	Slag heap partly levelled. Property of DSM (the former state mining company).

From TU Delft, 2012; Nederlands Mijnmuseum, 2012; Breij, 1991 and Messing, 1988)

J.F.R. Philips (1993), former director of the Social Historic Centre for Limburg (*Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg*), states that the few remnants that are still standing above ground can only be valued in their relation to the underground mining. Most distinctive are therefore the objects that strongly refer to the subterranean activities: the head frame and the slag or waste heap.

Nearly all the head frames were pulled down. Philips (1993) distinguishes two types of shafts: the so-called 'closed concrete' type and the 'open steel' type. The former type, consisting of imposing concrete structures like for example at the coal mines *Maurits*, *Emma* and *Hendrik*, has completely disappeared. The latter, 'open' type still has one example that was preserved. It is the brickwork and steel structure alongside the railroad tracks in Heerlen, which nowadays houses the Dutch Mining Museum. Apart from this example in Heerlen, the intake shaft of the *Domaniale* mine at Kerkrade, called the *Nullandschacht*, has survived as well. These two examples make up the total of remaining shaft structures in the Netherlands: only two of the 36 head frames that once linked the Limburg landscape with the underground coal fields still remain.

Concerning the slag or waste heaps, the picture is even less rosy. These artificial hills have practically all been partly or fully levelled. The most intact heap, belonging to the former *Oranje-Nassau IV* mine, is currently being threatened because of the economically interesting quartz sand that is located underneath the hill. Apart from the aforementioned head frames, hardly any of the industrial buildings, such as offices, cooling towers, coal bunkers, washing plants, pithead baths, engine and boiler houses, have been preserved (see Hofstee *et al.*, 1978).

## Belgian Limburg

Thyl Gheyselincx, 'crisis manager' in Belgian Limburg, announced the closing of the Kempen coal mines with his reorganization plan in 1986. Within a decade, 75 years of coal extraction in Belgian Limburg was put to an end. The last pit, i.e. the mine called *Zolder*, which had operated since 1930, closed its gates in 1992. The industrial structures left in the Kempen landscape were primarily seen as progress-impeding. These outdated, image-disturbing elements had to disappear as soon as possible, just like the Dutch had managed so efficiently in their 'from black to green' doctrine. After the social trauma of the mine closings, inhabitants of the region would first of all have the need to forget. As a consequence of the reorganization plans, much has disappeared. However, compared to the Netherlands a relatively large

part of the mining legacy has survived the demolition. After 1993, Belgian minister Johan Sauwens protected approximately 50 mine structures as a monument. What has remained of the Belgian Limburg coal industry, which dictated the lives of about 300,000 families? What has remained after the struggle between the reorganization plans and the heritage lobby?

Figure 14.2 Mining heritage in Belgium

Name	Concession	Active	Shafts	Preserved?
<i>Houthalen</i>	1911	1938-1964 (merger with Zolder)	2	Only head frames and office spaces. Slag heaps were levelled. The site now houses a museum and sheltered workshop.
<i>Zwartberg</i>	1906	1925-1966	2	Mine site was almost completely demolished. The slag heap was preserved.
<i>Eisden</i>	1906	1923-1987	2	Only a head frame and the main office were preserved. The second head frame was later reconstructed for tourist reasons. Slag heap is used for recreation. Site is redeveloped into a leisure park, including shopping mall and cinema.
<i>Waterschei</i>	1906	1924-1987	2	Main building and head frame were preserved. The slag heap is under formal protection. A business and science park are under planning.
<i>Beringen</i>	1906	1922-1989	2	Best preserved coal mine. The washing plant was saved, just like the slag heap. Nowadays the site houses the Flemish Mining Museum.
<i>Winterslag</i>	1906	1917-1988	2	A small part of the industrial buildings has been preserved. Slag heap is nowadays a walking park. The site is called C-mine, and features a business park, cinema, sports complex, design academy and visitors' centre.
<i>Zolder</i>	1906	1930-1992	2	A few constructions were preserved and protected. Slag heaps were bought up and turned into a nature park. The site houses several businesses.

Sources: Vanvaeck, 2009; Van Doorslaer, 2002 & 2004



If we turn our eyes to the most powerful symbols of the coal mines, the head frames and slag heaps, there is much left of the mining past in the Kempen. Three slag heaps were preserved in their original shape, namely the ones at *Eisden* and *Zwartberg*. When one realises that these hills contain roughly a third of all the material that was hoisted to the surface during the years of production, the immense scale of the subterranean complex of corridors becomes clear (Van Doorslaer, 2002). The artificially hilly country of Belgian Limburg is a powerful representation of the industry that held the region firmly in its grasp for over half a century.

Especially when compared to the Netherlands, many head frames have been preserved. Six of the seven Kempen mines still feature a construction that marked the connection of the subterranean extraction with the surface, sometimes over 200 feet high. Only *Zwartberg* has lost all of its pit-head frames. The closing of this mine in 1966, forced by the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), meant a drastic clearing of the at the time unloved industrial buildings. The demolition of *Zwartberg* took place in the same climate as the pit closures in the Netherlands, resulting in the same *tabula rasa*.

## The Post-Industrial Mining Landscape

Without pretending to be exhaustive, two explanations are described below for the considerable diversity in preservation and reuse of mining heritage. First of all, one can look at the gradual recognition of industrial remnants and the spreading of this recognition over Europe. So-called industrial archaeology first appeared in the UK during the 1950s. In its early stage, the discipline attracted only scientific interest, but from the 1970s onwards it reached the horizon of the National Trust and the national government. From that moment on, the interest in industrial remains spread swiftly over Great Britain, as the cradle of industrialisation. With the foundation of the *International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage* (TIC-CIH) in 1975, 'industrial heritage' would become the commonly accepted appellation. In South Wales, for example, most of the mines had already closed, but initiatives like *Big Pit* in Blaenavon and *Rhondda Heritage Park* in Trehafod arose unmistakably from the increasing interest in industrial heritage from the 1970s onwards.

On the European continent, the British example was followed in Belgium as one of the first countries. From 1976, a new criterion was added to the descriptions in the list of historic buildings and monuments: the so-called

‘industrial-archaeological value’ (*industrieel-archeologische waarde*). From that moment on, 500 industrial structures were listed. When Thyl Gheyselincx presented his reorganization plan, industrial heritage was already widely recognized and from 1993 onwards, minister Johan Sauwens protected 50 coal mine structures as monuments. The Belgian Limburg mine closures between 1987 and 1992 fell in a period in which the recognition of industrial heritage was growing. The belief that coal mine structures were anachronisms and needed to be removed from the landscape as soon as possible met with increasing resistance, and aroused enough opposition to prevent a Flemish ‘from black to green’.

If we turn our eyes to the Netherlands, we find a relatively late interest in industrial culture. Although it was already in 1974 that the Dutch National Authority for the Protection of Monuments spoke of ‘industrial and technical industry’ and a technical college at Delft organised a symposium on the subject matter, not until the 1990s can much public interest be observed. When the Dutch Institute for Industrial Heritage (PIE) was established in 1992, the recognition of industrial heritage transcended the traditional aesthetic, art-historical approach. The catching-up came to a climax in 1996, with the celebration of the *Year of Industrial Heritage*. Compared to the UK and Belgium, however, this was relatively late: the last Dutch coal mine (*Oranje-Nassau I*) had been closed and demolished twenty years before.

A second explanation can be found in the length of the period of mine closings. For example, the period in which the closings took place in South Wales proves to be much longer than in Flanders and the Netherlands. To a certain extent, the short period for which Ghyselincx’s reorganization plan had been designed led to alarmism. In only a limited amount of time, the period stretching between 1987 and 1992, all the coal mines in Belgian Limburg were closed and people actually feared that all the structures would be lost in the process. Many protests were made against the demolition.

In South Wales, the mine-closing period stretched over several decades: as early as 1947, already half of the coal mines had stopped production (Thomas, 2004). The remaining mines would close their shafts gradually until well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with some peaks in the 1960s and 1980s. Panic over the fear that all remnants would disappear in a short period of time does not seem to have occurred in the UK. One might consider this a reason for the relatively extensive loss of mining heritage in, for example, South Wales (C. Williams, interview, 3 May 2011). This explanation is of course in line with the spread of recognition of industrial heritage. The Dutch mine closings took place in a decade, but at that time the recognition of mining heritage had yet to appear.

## The Changing Will to Forget

In this chapter's introduction, attention was called to differences in local recognition of heritage, and to the differences in the will to preserve. The focus of this chapter is on the interface between the ideas about remembering and forgetting on the one hand, and the actual case studies of Dutch and Belgian Limburg on the other. For an analysis of the locally present will to preserve, two regional newspapers were used: *Limburgs Dagblad* (Dutch Limburg) and *Het Belang van Limburg* (Belgian Limburg).

After the social trauma of the closures in the Dutch mining district, there seemed first and foremost a 'need to forget'. This can be easily understood by considering the feelings of underestimation, uneasiness and embitterment that dominated the period after the mine closures. Former colliers felt deceived; they saw and felt their world collapse around them; their knowledge and experience had become irrelevant and their wages and status had evaporated. Many of them suffered from severe forms of silicosis, which at the time was trivialized by company medical officers. To gain insight into the 'will' to forget, a brief empirical study was carried out on an illustrative example in the late 1970s.

In 1979, a foundation was established that aimed to erect a national memorial for mine workers in the Dutch city of Kerkrade. The monument would never actually be constructed, but the archives of the *Limburgs Dagblad* give a clear picture of the intense local reactions to the construction plans (also see Geilenkirchen, 2011). The initiative was reviled by a large group of local people. Most of the readers' reactions that were published in the regional newspaper showed the same opinion: the money needed for the monument should be reserved for welfare provisions for the former colliers, and there were already enough monuments within the mining district. The latter idea, that the former mining landscape of Limburg contained 'enough' monuments, returned frequently. One of the reactions in *The Limburgs Dagblad*, by a reader named H.J. van Berghem, stated: 'Who on earth erects a monument for himself? That person must be too big for one's breeches. The mining district holds enough memories of mine workers and coal mines. It is certainly not required to add any more memorials, not in this way' (Van Berghem, 1979, translation by author). Within a year after the idea was made public, several councils stopped their cooperation on the plans. A spokesman of the municipality of Cadier en Keer wrote: 'It follows from the reactions of former colliers that there is no need for a mine monument. It is reasoned that there are enough monuments already, as is my own opinion' ("*Geen Mergellandse steun*",

1980, translation by author). A national collier monument would never be erected.

Twenty-five years later, this view had changed. The initiatives of a local organization by the name *Stichting Carboon* ('Carbon Foundation'), which includes the foundation of a coal mining museum, enjoys the broad support of the local population; an indication of the resurgence of a need for preserving mining memories. The redevelopment of a former morgue of the state mine *Wilhelmina* into a remembrance chapel is another example of this resurgence.

Examining the records of the regional Belgian Limburg newspaper *Belang van Limburg* resulted in a similar view as before. When the coal mine of Zwartberg closed in 1966, in the same period as the Dutch closures, it led to a storm of protest. During the protest marches, two people were killed, which nurtured the 'need to forget' afterwards. The tragedy of Zwartberg, and all the buildings and machinery that would remind people of it, had to be removed swiftly and thoroughly from the Belgian Limburg landscape (Cops, 1970). However, just like in the Dutch mining district, this view changed over time. Local residents increasingly seemed to feel the need to do something about the complete denial of their past. In 2002, about 1000 people attended the unveiling of the coal mine monument in Zwartberg, including a noticeable number of former colliers (C.N., 2002). After years of silence, the wish to keep mining memories alive appears to have come to the surface.

## Conclusion

The will to retain mining heritage, to retain living memories of the coal industry, is both multi-coloured and dynamic. For a long time, the heritage of the mining era was not accepted, but many of the former mining districts show a change in embracing their once denied past. The first section of this chapter described how philosopher Ankersmit links a traumatic period with what he calls 'formative forgetting'. Ankersmit introduces a paradoxical sense of forgetting, which is at the same time formative for a new identity. Radical transformations, such as the end of the Industrial Period and the 'casualness' of the coal mine, seem to result in a leaving behind of the old identity. In the case of Dutch Limburg, it seemed as if people were ashamed of the closures, and very suddenly the mines belonged to a 'world we have lost'. Ankersmit's notion of 'formative forgetting' appears to be very useful for the study of mining heritage and its development. The

regenerated interest in the industrial past, with the sizeable coal industry as the central focus, appears to be a good example of the aforementioned 'pain of Prometheus': this constitutes the pain of old, left-behind identities, that have been dragged along since the forgetting of the traumatic closures.

A trauma is processed: with the passage of time there appears to be (a need for) *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Heedless of this, the Flemish expert in mining heritage Bert van Doorslaer (2002) describes how some heritage experts plead for a *culture of slowness*. Material remnants should not quickly be demolished or put into new use, but should be given a period of repose. How we deal with heritage should be in phase with the developing 'will' to preserve. This is a notion that should be strongly employed in regard to mining heritage, and could be carried further to other forms of 'painful' heritage from the recent past. The notion of 'Promethic pain', of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, has important consequences for dealing with heritage that 'hurts', whether this heritage stems from the mining era or, for example, the Second World War.

The dynamics in the 'will' to remember are not limited to Western Europe. Sociologist Hideo Nakazawa (2009) describes how the population of the former mining town of Yubari on Hokkaido (Japan) wanted to forget the black page of the closures in their mining past, but also how this view changed eventually. The will to forget the mining past turned out to be replaced by a locally nurtured need for preservation. The temporal structures that result in a revaluation of 'painful' heritage seem to apply to this Japanese example as well.

In the decades in which heritage became part of our thinking about culture and space, the question whether we actually need heritage was rarely asked. Why would we cherish a past that ruined the lungs of thousands, that brought about large-scale unemployment, that spread feelings of underestimation, bitterness and grief, and besmirched the landscape with dust? When we gain insight into how the amalgam of remembering and forgetting is linked with our material culture, with landscape, the aforementioned question becomes increasingly easy to answer. Landscape, as the most encompassing and expansive form of *place*, allows memories to take root. In order to close a traumatic period, such as the international, problematic closing stage of the coal mines, one needs a period of remembering (*re-membering*) in which the paradox of formative forgetting occurs: that what is forgotten is assimilated into the new identity. To be able to forget, the *place*, the mining landscape of slag heaps, head frames, washing plants and pithead baths, is all of the same importance.

The recognition of 'painful' heritage, which includes the mining heritage that was described in the previous section, appears to be interwoven with the 'Promethic pain' as it comes to the surface in former mining districts. Moment and character of the resurgence of an industrial past may vary from region to region, but the temporal structures of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and 'Promethic pain' seem to be universal.

This means not so much that there is an urgency to preserve everything (if we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change), but that we need to consider a new factor when we discuss heritage preservation. This factor is the dynamic character of memory: its 'evolution'. Memory, composed of the decisions of what we remember and forget, undergoes an evolution; an evolution that is tightly tied up with the changes we make in its repository, the landscape in which we stand.

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## 15 Fatal Attraction

Nazi Landscapes, Modernism, and Holocaust Memory

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### Abstract

Landscapes are in western culture considered as ‘art’, valued by scenic qualities represented in landscape painting and reproduced in landscape architecture. Working under the fetish of authenticity by singling out aesthetic styles and iconic periods, connoisseurship is still a basic assumption of authorized heritage narratives. Although recent biographical approaches of historical landscapes have opposed this reductionism, the prevailing metaphor of an archaeological layering of time prevents a thorough understanding of the landscape/mindscape nexus. Building on Marvin Samuels’s long-neglected notion of authorship, this chapter offers a more dynamic perspective by drawing attention to the complex relationship of past motives and present meanings that are too often forgotten and neglected. This is illustrated by the remarkable contrast between our attitude to Nazi Germany’s ‘traditionalist’ landscape art and to its ‘modernist’ spatial planning and landscaping. Thus, while Hitler’s taste is banned from the public sphere and Himmler’s Auschwitz has become Europe’s iconic heart of darkness, Nazi highways, the VW Beetle car, and ‘Nordic’ landscapes have lost nothing of their original attraction. Yet the way we domesticate ‘foreign’ pasts and cultures by transforming them into ‘our’ common heritage has made us blind for some uneasy continuities of the Third Reich’s *Ordnungswahn*, and its ‘nationalization of nature’ that confronts us with the uncomfortable possibility that Nazism still ‘speaks’ to present generations.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, heritage of war, spatial cleansing, modernism, authorship, Nazism, Holocaust, terrascapes, heritagescapes

Landscape and heritage form a strong couple in European culture. Since the Renaissance landscapes have been perceived as ‘art’ and valued by scenic qualities, represented in painting and reproduced through design and architecture. This connoisseurship is still a basic assumption of heritage conservation and tourism, working under the fetish of authenticity by singling

out aesthetic styles and iconic periods. Although recent biographical approaches to historical landscapes have opposed this reductionism by stressing long-term development, the landscape/mindscape nexus can – in my view – not be grasped by the prevailing metaphor of an archaeological layering of time. Alternatively, a more dynamic perspective is offered by Marwyn Samuels's long-neglected notion of authored landscapes that points to past motives and present meanings (Samuels, 1979, and compare Kolen, 2005). Authorship reminds us that cultural landscapes are not simply there, but are made and remade by different 'authors' as functional and ideological spaces in specific forms for specific reasons. Yet this dynamic concept of agency or authorship should also make us aware of the use and abuse of landscapes for ideological reasons; naturalizing power relations by erasing 'wrong' histories after revolutions and military occupations (Mitchell, 2002, x-xi).

Thus I will argue that we cannot understand the often contested meanings of landscapes without knowing the historical contexts and symbolic meanings of their making as well as destruction, e.g. the sites of trauma or terrortsapes. Modern landscapes in particular cannot be trusted at their face value because of a certain degree of 'heritagescaping' (Garden, 2006; Van der Laarse, 2008). This will be illustrated by the remarkable contrast between our attitude to Nazi art, banned from museums as bad taste, and the general acceptance of 'Nazi nature', which left its mark on post-war landscapes in Germany as well as in many occupied territories.

In other words, the wartime cleansing and colonization of Germany's occupied territories in the East from 1939 to 1945 were related to a large-scale fabrication of brand new *Heimatscapes* in the interest of the German economy and German *Lebensraum*. It is this radical utopia of *Machbarkeit* (Makeability) and what Niels Gutschow (2001) named *Ordnungswahn* (Order Mania), which in my view is the Third Reich's modern legacy. Paradoxically, in the context of genocide, mass migration and national reconstruction, these Nazi heritagescapes seem to many people today no less authentic than the pre-existing environments of the disappeared dwellers of the pre-war era. A rethinking of this eco-totalitarian approach to heritage might therefore raise a profound distrust of our own pleasures of the imagination.

## Unwanted Memory

Safely stored deep in the subterranean vaults of the US Army Centre for Military History, a small collection of watercolour paintings of historical towns and landscapes from 1910 to 1915 is preserved in a filing cabinet.

Thus far, the paintings have never been exposed to the public and are only referred to as *The Watercolors*. What explains this remarkable silencing of an age-old genre that only three generations ago was still so immensely popular among European and American artists, travellers and art collectors? Of course, landscape painting and picturesque travel have always had a hidden agenda of power, space and identity (Bermingham, 1986; Darby, 2000; Mitchell, 2002, 5-34). However, without doubt, the illusion of innocence and nostalgia had been lost in the trenches of the First World War. This bloody break with the bourgeois order was responsible both for Europe's first modern memory boom and the birth of modernist art, as symbolized by fallen soldiers' remembrances (Mosse, 1990; Winter, 2006) as well as by the nihilist rites of the Dadaist and Futurist avant-garde (Ekstein, 1989), and the Russian and German political revolutions. It was in this unequalled turmoil of loss and renewal that some men were challenged to reinvent themselves as mass politicians, such as in the case of the unsuccessful painter and defeated soldier who signed these watercolours with 'A. Hitler'.

Although produced without any political intention before the war, *The Watercolors* are currently the world's most protected works of art, and just like Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1924-1925) still banned from the public sphere (Kocken, 2003; Goldschmith, 2007). Yet this hidden Washington war collection once belonged to Hitler's public image-builder, the photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. As one of the *Führer's* 'court photographers' he recorded his public and private life in no less than 2.5 million negatives. Hoffmann used them for all sorts of glossies and propaganda publications, such as *Ein Volk ehrt seinen Führer* and his famous Berchtesgaden series of Hitler's clique at the Alp villa Berghof. Hoffmann was the owner of the photographic shop where Hitler's mistress Eva Braun stood behind the counter. When the *Führer* awarded him with the title of professor at the Great German Art Exhibition of 1938, his expanding 'publishing house for Nazi photography' already employed some 300 people. Hitler's photographer received the watercolours as a gift from his patron and was still so much attached to them that immediately after the war he submitted a restitution claim against the American government.

Though restitution claims are commonly associated with formerly Jewish property looted by the Nazis, the spoils of genocide were in fact soon followed by those of victory. After the Nazi plunder, souvenir hunting in Germany by allied soldiers was a common practice in 1944 and 1945, as might also be illustrated by John Pistone's robbery of *Hitler's Photo Album* from the Berghof (CBS News, 2009) – a destiny comparable to Hitler's library, which is kept safe behind the walls of the Washington Library of Congress

(Ryback, 2008). It shows how loot and plunder were as much common practice among the Allies as among the Nazis, and so were post-war restitution claims of German civilians at the allied courts. In fact they exceeded by far those of Jewish survivors and American-Jewish restitution organizations directly after the War (Meng, 2011, 29-59). But like Hitler's Library also *The Watercolors* were never returned to their former owner. After Hoffmann's death in 1957 his claim was continued by his daughter (who later sold her rights to her commissioner, a Texan collector of Hitler memorabilia); it was finally dismissed by the American Supreme Court in 2004.

There is of course no objective reason why objects like these should never return home. But heritage is as much about disowning and destruction as about collecting and preservation. We clean up the past by downgrading unwanted heritage – and what is more unwanted than things associated with Hitler's authorship? In the modern art world Hitler's art works are still so strictly tabooed that the English artists Jake and Dinos Chapman purchased some years ago for £115,000 a complete series of Hitler paintings, including thirteen watercolours which they managed to resell for £685,000 after garnishing them with psychedelic rainbows, stars and hearts. They kept the oil paintings, though, to display them at the much talked-about exposition *If Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy Would We Be* (2008) in the London White Cube Gallery. Instead of brightening them up in flower-power fashion, Hitler's realistic portraits in 17th-century Dutch painting style were set about by the Chapman brothers with a knife and transformed into carnival horror pieces. I remember being simultaneously irritated and fascinated by this act of iconoclasm. For why should one artist mutilate the work of another as a new work of art in a museum of all places? Although the same artists were strongly criticized some years before for a comparable 'dressing up' of 83 engravings of Goya's *Disastres de la Guerra* of 1810-1816 in *Gigantic Fun* (2001), their creative destruction was this time praised as an exposure of 'the truth' of Hitler's art (Akbar, 2008).

What explains such double standards? The answer seemed to be hidden in the basement of the London gallery, where the Chapman brothers exposed in 2008 as a sideshow their older installation *Fucking Hell*: maquettes of horrible concentration camps in showcases filled with generations of heaped up corpses in the dark, decaying decor of the Holocaust's bloodlands. At display in this *Warhammer* miniature world was not the old fashioned picturesque of the young Hitler's taste, but the world of the camps as a projection of his matured, nihilist mind; put otherwise, the purifying, horrible sublime of Nazism's Arcadian utopia, in which even the Führer himself was represented as a painter (Chapman & Chapman, 2008; Mosse, 1991).

## Purity and Modernity

So, with Hell we may wonder about the diabolic relationship between fascism and modernity. Though framed as a barbaric hell by the Chapman brothers as well as in current Holocaust literature and movies, the Nazi utopia of a return to Nordic nature and Aryan purity should not be understood as anti-modernism. It was a form of 'totalitarian modernism' (Griffin, 2007, 219-223, 306-335, and compare Dubowitz *et al.*, 2010) or 'creative destruction' as coined in Werner Sombart's *Krieg und Kapitalismus* (1913), implying that capitalism leads to new wealth for some by destroying the wealth of others. For, hijacking Karl Marx's dialectical twin-concepts *Verelendung* and *Vernichtung*, this voluntaristic notion of historical necessity played a key role in Nazi spatial planning politics as conducted by a 'Führer-Artist' posing as the 'perfect Wagnerite' (Spotts, 2002; Michaud, 2004 [1996]). As an art of destruction the industrial modernity of the Holocaust (Baumann, 1989) seems therefore closely related to Hitler's wish for immortality through grand designs, leadership and image building, as copied by almost all leading Nazis and *Wehrmacht* officers 'working towards the Führer' (Kershaw, 1993).

Figure 15.1 Hitlers Volkswagen





Nazism was a missionary project of steeled artist-soldiers, fighting for a total mobilization of the nation for the sake of race, state and purity (Boterman, 1998). Thus Nazi landscape planning was much indebted to the modernist illusion of speed and scenery, such as expressed in Leni Riefenstahl's Agfacolor propaganda films, Walter Frentz's and Hugo Jäger's colour photos of Hitler's private life (Gaertringen, 2007; Atlas, 2009), and Heinrich Hoffmann's innovative 3D images of the 1936 Olympics in Munich (sold with special glasses) and his photo series of the *Führer's* tours through Nazi Germany in Hitler's luxurious eight cylinder type 770 Mercedes-Benz motorcar, bought from the royalties of *Mein Kampf* (1924-25). Yet not only industry, science, propaganda, film and architecture, but also landscape, city space and infrastructure played a fundamental role in Nazism's staging of modernity.

More than anything else the Third Reich's landscaped motorways or *Reichsautobahnen* became the symbol of Germany's modernity. Combining speed, mobilization and a patriot love of nature, they opened up new national landscapes for ordinary citizens. These landscapes were experienced as one huge *Heimat* museum, scanned through a car window from the high-speed road (Zeller, 2007; Seilder, 2000). The main icon of this *völkisch* consumption of landscape was Hitler's Volkswagen, of which the prototype was sketched on a beer mat by the prospective 'art dictator' at a Munich terrace in 1932. Four years later the *Kraft durch Freude – Wagen*, as designed by Ferdinand Porsche, was taken into production in Hitler's new industrial city *KdF-Stadt* (Wolfsburg) that was built in a short time by forced labour. Remarkably, though, unlike Hitler's *Watercolors*, this popular family car was never tabooed *after* the War. On the contrary, when the production began again in 1946 in the heavily bombed Wolfsburg factory in the British occupation zone, it was framed as a first sign of Germany's post-war reconstruction. World-famous by its pet name *Käfer* or Beetle, Hitler's *Volkswagen* is held nowadays as one of Germany's most prominent Erinnerungsorte, symbolizing more than anything else the post-war Wirtschaftswunder (Schütz, 2001; Ebbinhaus & Roth, 1988). Thus instead of painful symbol of Nazism's modernity, Hitler's dream car has become a nostalgic symbol of modernity – and nobody has felt obliged to lock it up in the American Pentagon!

Now heritage will always be used and misused for politics of identity, and thus tells us as much about forgetting as about remembering. Nonetheless, a return of memory may also confront us with surprises. This might be illustrated by the public impact of the so-called *Höcker Album*, which in 2007 was acquired by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington from an anonymous donor and exposed immediately on the

Figure 15.2 Auschwitz Album



Internet. It is considered to be the photo album of the German commanding officer Karl-Friedrich Höcker, a former assistant of Auschwitz-Birkenau's camp commanders Richard Baer, Rudolf Höss and Franz Hössler, and besides them his album shows photos of other well-known Nazi leaders, such as the supervisor of the Birkenau's gas chamber Otto Moll, and Auschwitz's notorious camp doctor Joseph Mengele. Though consisting of only sixteen cardboard leaves with 116 pictures of Auschwitz's daily life in the summer and fall of 1944 by a Nazi war photographer in the SS compartments of the extermination camp, they completely subvert our brutal image of Hitler's willing executioners.

Hence most disturbing of this soldier's souvenir are not the usual demonstrations of male comradeship, but the pictures of these SS-officers and a group of *SS Helferinnen*, while singing popular songs with an accordionist at the *SS Hütte Soletal*, a holiday resort 30 km south of Auschwitz/Oświęcim at the banks of the Sola river. It is painful to know that these photos of jolly young people were shot on July 22, when the pressure of work in Birkenau rose to a high, and the new crematorium ovens of Topf & Söhne were operating at full capacity; for this was the period of the gassing of more than

400,000 Hungarian Jews. As this was a relatively tranquil day with just 150 new prisoners having arrived at Birkenau's railway platform, of which 117 were immediately sent to the gas chambers, and 21 men and 12 women set to work as convicts, it might well have been that Höss and the others were rewarded for their work performance with a day off at the SS recreation lodge (Lewis, 2007; Dwork & Van Pelt, 1996, 338-343; Pressac & Van Pelt, 1998; Braham, 1998; Wensch & Rincke, 2010). The superior civilized naturalness of these high-ranking Nazi officers, demonstrated in the pictures at Solahütte, might be seen as a perfect complement to the dehumanization of the Jewish 'inferiors', who had actually built the place as slave labourers – a fact unknown to most inhabitants of Polish Oświęcim (Auschwitz), and probably a reason for its quite remarkable, recent demolition (Citroen & Starzynska, 2011).

Until 1980 people were used to see the Nazi concentration camps through the eye of the American, English, Canadian and Russian liberators, shocked by the horrors of dead bodies and skinny inmates behind barbed wire in striped prison clothes. Thus our image of the Holocaust was mainly based on Allied war photography in international magazines like *Life* and *Vogue*, stories of survivors, the Nuremberg Trials, and early films like the US Nuremberg propaganda film *That Justice be Done* (1946) and the Soviet documentary *Nuremberg Trials* (1947), or Wanda Jakubowska's Polish Auschwitz film *Ostatni Etap* (1947), in which former prisoners figured in original camp uniforms (Van Vree, 2010; Van der Laarse, 2013).

Yet shortly after the 1978 Polish nomination of the Auschwitz-Birkenau National Museum (1947) for the UNESCO world heritage list, the US Hollywood mini TV-series *Holocaust* (1978), Pope John Paul II's visit to Auschwitz in 1979, and Yad Vashem's public disclosure of Lili Jacob's *Auschwitz Album* in 1980 had made Auschwitz (instead of Buchenwald, Dachau or Majdanek) the main symbol of a new Holocaust memory boom (Hellman & Klarsfeld, 1980; Gutman & Gutterman, 2002). The 56 pages with 193 photos of Lili Jacob's album (used already as proof against Höcker and the other commanding officers in the German Auschwitz Trial of 1963-1965) were after the SS evacuation of Auschwitz in January 1945 miraculously found in a deserted barrack in Camp Dora by a Hungarian-Jewish inmate who recognized herself with her own family in the pictures. By a strange coincidence these only existing photos of the dehumanizing and deathly selection process at the ramps of Birkenau, which would influence Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and a whole range of Holocaust novels and movies, date from almost the same period (May/June 1944) Lili Jacobs arrived in Auschwitz. The photos were probably taken by the same SS photographer as

the *Höcker Album*, either Bernard Walter or Ernst Hofmann, and later found by her in Camp Dora after the Russian liberation of Auschwitz January 27 1945.

A US Army documentary from 1945 showed how American soldiers forced the inhabitants of the city of Weimar to walk the pastoral bypass to the nearby 'hell of Buchenwald'. This horrific display of heaps of corpses or 'cadaver memorials' that in Rudy Koshar's words 'amounted to a deep, albeit temporary, rupture in the memory landscape' (Koshar 2000, 209-10, and compare Knigge, 2002), were however not only meant to make the Germans aware of the Nazi crimes. For, to speak with Roman Karman's English version of the 1947 Soviet documentary *Nuremberg Trials*, it should also make clear that without the Allied victory the Nazis would have 'turned the whole world into a Majdanek' – a nightmare echoed six decades later in the Hell of the Chapman brothers. Probably many of the millions of Holocaust tourists of the last decades walked with this in mind through Auschwitz's iconic gate to experience Europe's deepest wound as a universal, traumatic heritage of mankind.

However, in complete opposition to the *Auschwitz Album*, the *Höcker Album* fundamentally questioned this iconic image of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Van der Laarse, 2009). Europe's unparalleled terror- and traumascape is portrayed here in precisely the well-ordered, pastoral way promoted by Himmler's Nazi planners, as if the whole terrifying spot was a sort of holiday camp. Like *The Watercolors*, the photographs confront us with a disturbing normality, although I find the *Höcker Album* a lot more troublesome than Hitler's picturesque paintings. Anyone who tries to understand the meaning of the Holocaust by looking at these pictures ends up with questions. For, if the camera is not lying, why do we not see a glimpse of the industry of death? Could it really be that these ultimate perpetrators were not even noticing their unparalleled crimes against humanity? Yet precisely when staring at the cheery, human faces of Hitler's hangmen, Höcker's pictures evoke a strong voyeuristic feeling of enmity, shame and curiosity. For how disturbing is the pastoral image of these war criminals in the black hole of the Holocaust relaxing in a nature resort? For ages civilized people searched for healing in nature, and if we are shocked by these pictures it is not because of what they show but of what they conceal: prisoners behind barbed wire, barracks, gas chambers, and crematoria. How could we ever comprehend the criminal behaviour of these people, looking so akin to ourselves, yet having fun in the heart of darkness?

The knowledge that the Holocaust camps were not created accidentally in the panic of war, but were carefully planned and designed as systematically

controlled no-go-areas, indicates how much they were actually ‘the result of the exact, modern, “scientific” encompassing of persons with card indexes, card-sorting machines, charts, graphs, maps and diagrams’ (Burleigh, 1988, 10). Although it might be hard to imagine that the Nazi system of ‘legal terror’ by means of forced labour (*Arbeit macht frei*) had its origin in the project of the Enlightenment as much as in Romanticism, it was combining a rational belief in planning and statistics with Hegel’s Idea of Progress, Herder’s essentialist notion of the nation state, Spengler’s fear of the decline of the West, Lombroso’s hygienic stigmatization of criminals, and Max Nordau’s fight against the stigmata of degeneration (*Entartung*) (Wachsmann, 2004; Schwegman, 1998; Van der Laarse, 1999). Thus Nazism could be seen as fulfilling a racial, civilizing mission by new totalitarian means under a strongly authored *Führer* principle. In addition, we should consider the crucial role of European colonialism as a model for Nazi – as well as Stalinist – ‘continental imperialism’ (Ahrendt, 1951; Steinmetz, 2009). Practicing ethnic cleansing on indigenous ‘people without space’ (*Volk ohne Raum*) – such as the German experience with concentration camps and racial anthropological experiments during the military mass murdering of the Herero tribes in Namibia in South-West Africa in the first decade of the 20th century (Olusoga & Erichson, 2010; Langbehn & Salama, 2011) – it imported the colonial experience to the European continent.

Thus the message of the *Höcker Album* seems to be the Aryan ‘white man’s burden’ of health and purity, in other words modernity – modernity in which in analogy to the garden, nature is purged of ambivalence, mixture, chaos, wildness and decadence by rational ordering, weeding and selection (Bauman, 1989; Van der Laarse, 1998, 1-14; Semelin, 2005). As is well known, men like Höss liked order and regularity not only in the form of military rules or the schedules of transports, but also in the camp commander’s private gardens kept up by camp prisoners as pastoral arcadia with beautiful flower beds (Broszat, 1963).

In fact, Nazism not only resembled the racial practice of a botanist, it was a form of botany. So Himmler in 1937 proclaimed that all SS-territories should be transformed into ‘a paradise for nature and birds’ (as quoted in Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001, 298). In Dachau he had already put out storks and experimented with bee-keeping and the cultivation of homeopathic herbs. Hitler, Hess, Rosenberg and Himmler were also ardent vegetarians, anti-urbanists, and anti-vivisectionists. Their racism was filled with biological metaphors, and their distaste of exotic, foreign species – trees, plants and animals – was closely related to their revulsion of *volksfeindliche*, uprooted races like Jews and gypsies. Endangering the purity of Aryan blood, these

*Fremdkörper* should be removed forever from German soil. Thus the Nazis cleansed German society of dirt and vermin in the same way as botanists and ecologists cleansed the German landscape. Hence, like vermin, the status of a human alien was even far below that of an animal, for according to Heinrich Himmler who, like many swastika occultists, felt attracted to Buddhism, every animal did have a right to live. While furiously opposing an SS *Sonderkommando's* proposal for a hunting party in Poland in October 1941, however, two weeks later the Buddhist SS *Reichsführer* did not even want to discuss for a minute the necessity of the elimination of the Jewish 'lice' of Rostock, which was 'simply a question of purity' (as quoted in Padfield, 1990, 351-353).

### Making *Heimatscapes*

Shortly after the German invasion in Poland, when Hitler appointed Himmler as *Reichskommissar für Festigung deutschen Volkstums* to strengthen the German race by a *völkische Neuordnung* (ethnic reorganization) of the newly incorporated territories in the East, Himmler attracted the Berlin geographer Konrad Meyer as head of his planning office. Together with his Berlin colleague, the landscape architect Heinrich Wiepking-Jürgensmann, SS *Oberführer* professor Meyer and his team started to work in 1940 at the Berlin institute of *Agriculture* on the redevelopment of occupied West-Poland – renamed *Reichsgau Wartheland*. They worked according to the geopolitical principle of German *Raumforschung* on the implementation of the political principle of *Heim ins Reich* (Home in the Empire): the population transfer of Germans from the Soviet Baltics and Bessarabia to Nazi Germany ordered by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt (1939). Prepared in secret, Himmler's Berlin scholars developed in July 1941 a first draft of the SS *Generalplan Ost* to be finished with Himmler's consent a year later (Meyer, 1942a, and compare Rössler and Schleiermacher, 1993; Burchard, 1997; Haar, 2005; Heinemann *et al.*, 2006). Meyer's master plan offered the tools for an implementation of the SS policy of the *Ostsiedlung* (the colonization of Poland) by means of planned 'Germanization', or 're-Germanization' in the eyes of the Germans. Scale models of Germanized Warthegau had already been shown by Meyer to Nazi leaders at the Berlin exhibition *Planung und Aufbau im Osten* of March 1941, which was accompanied a year later by a scientific catalogue edited by Himmler. The aim of Master Plan East was, according to Meyer's preface of *Planung und Aufbau*, the *Eindeutschung*



Figure 15.3 Exhibition *Planung und Aufbau im Osten*, Berlin 1941



*der neuen Gebiete, um die Ordnung, Gestaltung und Entfaltung von Raum und Landschaft als künftige Heimat deutscher Menschen* (Meyer, 1942b, 3).

This racial policy of landscape cleansing culminated in Himmler's *Allgemeine Anordnung [...] über die Gestaltung der Landschaft in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten* (General Alignment for Landscape Development in the Occupied Territories in the East) of December 1942. It was intended as an extrapolation of Meyer's Master Plan East to the occupied territories in Russia. During the massive German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Himmler had already proclaimed two other annexed territories next to Warthegau, namely Ostland (the Baltics and North-West Russia) and Gotengau (Belorussia, Ukraine and Crimea). Like the occupations of Norway and the Netherlands (Westland), which likewise were culturally supervised by Himmler because of their expected incorporation in a greater pan-Germanic *Reich* (Hausmann, 2005, 215), these Eastern occupations were justified by archaeological and anthropological Nazi expeditions. They were headed by scholars such as Germany's leading archaeologist Herbert Jankuhn, who tried to prove the existence in antiquity of some Scythian and Gothic tribes as ancestors of the Nordic, Germanic culture, with the help of artefacts looted by SS roving and killing units from local museums



(Heinemann, 2003, 361; Pringle, 2006, 218). Though searching in vain up to 1943 with his Kiel colleague Karl Kersten and the Dutch director of the National Service for Archaeological Heritage F.C. Bursch for the remnants of an old Gothic capital with a mighty palace that would resemble the glory of Rome, Jankuhn envisioned Gotengau as the historic Teutonic homeland where German man would return in a newly made landscape that would look 'something like that of Schleswig-Holstein' (as quoted in Pringle, 2006, 220, and compare Eickhoff, 2003, 259, 266-9).

Like Auschwitz and other newly developed industrial cities in the incorporated eastern territories the Polish countryside would equally be developed by means of the Nazi camp system with slave labour. Yet, far from industrial this would come to look like a 'healthy German landscape' in which Aryan settlers would live in harmony with nature in accord with *deutscher Wesensart* (German Identity). These heritagescapes would consist of newly developed small towns (*Heimstätten*), German villages with graveyards and a *Thingplatz* (for outdoor festivities), 'soldier farms' (*Wehrbauernhöfe*), Saxon 'manor houses' rewarded to SS leaders, and Nordic woods and Celtic fields with hedgerows (Gröning & Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1987; Staudenmeier, 1995).

As Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn notices, Himmler's love of nature and landscape patriotism derived from a 19th-century romantic tradition that was being radicalized after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 by a process of imperial nation-building. Like many other European countries, Germany shaped its national culture at the same time by an ideological 'nationalization of the masses' as well as by a 'nationalization of nature' (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1997, 190, and compare Mosse, 1975; Lip, 1987, 264). However, more than anywhere else the romantic notion of a sacred bond of people, land and nation was used in Wilhelminian Germany as a political tool for purifying the nation's soil and culture from 'artificial' Italian and French cultural traces. Thus the influential German landscape architect Willy Lange politicized the romantic Anglo-style *Gartenkunst* to become a 'truly German landscape style'. Praising the sublime and picturesque beauty of the German Rhine, the age-old oak woods, and the Saxon dolmen landscape, his patriot love for Germany was directly related to a mythic belief in the purity of Nordic nature. Lange, praised up to the present as the founder of German natural gardening, had already in *Gartengestaltung der Neuzeit* (1907) introduced the term ecology for his *Blut und Boden* theory of a genetically based relationship of Germans to natural landscapes; an age-old habitat of which the preservation was considered to be a precondition for racial health and purity (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1999). Arranged with megalith graves

and invented memorial monuments, these *Wehrlandschaften* (occupation-scapes) fortified with *Ewigkeitswerten* (eternal values), could, according to Wiepking and others, only be fathomed by Germans (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2003; Brands, 2001, 245-247). After the Great War of 1914-1918, this ecological racism became related to a longing for the reconstruction of Nordic primeval nature. Thus by reproducing ancient German forests, farms and defences, Germans would experience a sort of homecoming in their natural *Heimat*.

Himmler, convinced of the ecological superiority of this *Nordische Gartenkunst*, even ordered his SS *Ahnenerbe*, the Nazi branch organization for archaeologists, anthropologists and racial scientists searching for the roots of Aryan culture, to found a research institute on plant genetics in Graz in Austria. Alongside the *Süddeutschen Institute of Volkswissenschaften* it was preparing an ethnic cleansing in Carinthia and Slovenia based on scenarios of spatial planning and population transfers (Wedekind, 2005, 113). Scientists experimented there with 'Aryan' grains derived from Ernst Schäfer's 1938/39 SS Tibet expedition, which was documented in the popular movie *Geheimnis Tibet* (1943). One of its members, the anthropologist Bruno Beger, applied his experience with racial measurements on a selected group of 89 Jews and some Poles, Roma, and Asians from Auschwitz in the Alsatian KZ camp Natzweiler in 1943. After their gassing the dead bodies were for decades preserved in Strasbourg University, waiting in vain to be skinned for *Ahnenerbe*'s skeleton collection (Hale, 2003; Prindle, 2006, 257-267).

This modern belief in makeability was crucial to the establishment of an official landscape policy in Nazi Germany that culminated in an essentialist and totalitarian 'naturalization of the nation', combining blood and soil, landscape and heritage into the utopian idea of a Teutonic *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1997, 195-199). The principles of this *Heimat* phenomenology were in the 1930s propagated and practised by *völkisch* organizations such as the anti-Semite *Tannenberg Bundes* (later *Das Deutschvolk*) and the *Volksbund (Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge)* (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1997, 201; Brands, 2001, 238-241, 254-255; Fuhrmeister, 2007). Far removed from the cities at the empty German heaths they established graveyards and memorials of fallen soldiers. These shattered sites would become the breeding ground for the natural and national materialization of Nazi Germany's racial landscape philosophy.

Opposing Christian crosses, the Nazis rooted their 'naturalist' ideology far beyond Christianity in the deepest layers of Germany's soil. Purged from *Fremdkörper* only 'native trees like oak, lime, birch, ash, yew, juniper, and other evergreen coniferous species were good enough for this reinvented Teutonic memorial architecture, whereas monuments had to be constructed

Figure 15.4 Sachsenhain



of native natural stones, preferably boulders with engravings of prehistoric runes and swastikas' (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1997, 207-208, 218). This racial botanic ban on alien species was so severe that even roses were banished from the mythical German woods (Brands, 2001, 228-229; Schama, 1995, 75-134). For only Nordic materials would give a worthy, patriot expression to the honour of the ancestors, the German race, and the love of nature.

This Teutonic death cult reached its height at Sachsenhain or Saxon's Grove, designed by the influential landscape architect Wilhelm Hübotter in 1934 under the authority of Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* and Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg. What today seems an innocent natural walkway was in fact a first and highly successful proof of an authentic national-socialist memorial site, erected by Hübotter on land of his own (Agte, 2001; Brands, 2001, 222; Gröning, 2002, 130). This still existing memorial landscape commemorates the mythical 4500 victims of Charles the Great's massacre of the fierce, rebellious Saxons who refused to be converted to Christianity, at the border of the river Aller in 782. This forgotten catastrophe was brought back in Germany's memorial landscape (for landscaping was crucial to German memory culture) by means of the layout of a two-km-long, wooded bypass, lined by 4500 boulders and leading to a parade ground in the middle of the German woods.

From 1942 Hübötter was closely associated with Wiepking's and Meyer's SS Masterplan East, and consequently with the design and landscaping of Himmler's Polish concentration camps (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1997, 218). The *Reichsführer's* policy for a *Heim ins Reich* was sketched aptly in films and novels like Karl Götz's *Die grosse Heimkehr* (1941) as a homecoming in the former Eastern territories of the Teutonic knights. Polish towns like Posen (Poznan), Lodsch or Litzmannstadt (Łódz) and Auschwitz (Oświęcim) were transformed 'again' into German cities, and whole territories were vacated for the benefit of 'returning' *Volkdeutschen*, 'coming home' mostly from the Baltics, but also from Danish Jutland and the occupied Netherlands where German leaders expected (wrongly) that a third of the *germanisch-niederdeutsche* population could be recruited for the *Osteinsetz* (Bosma, 1993). Thus Götz's novel was published in translation, a Dutch 'Eastern Company' was erased, and Dutch SS-volunteers for the Eastern Front were rewarded with farms and goods of the expelled population of the anti-Bolshevik frontier zones Ostland and Ukraine.

As we saw, the Nazis legitimated their *Lebensraum* policy in the eastern occupied territories as a return after 600 years to their lost *Heimat*, while actually inventing new *Heimatscapes* '*in der sich der deutsche Mensch heimisch fühlt und in der er wirklich bodenständig werden kann*' (quoted in Rössler, 1990, 181-182). Their eastern paradise of blood and soil, however, became a hell for Jews and Poles (Dwork & Van Pelt, 1996, 127-159). Nazi Germanization policy had therefore nothing to do with old fashioned Habsburg Germanization, as Himmler stated clearly in 1942: '*Unsere Aufgabe ist es, den Osten nicht im alten Sinne zu germanisieren*', which means in the old way of supporting the assimilation of existing Slavic populations in German language and culture, but to guarantee that '*im Osten nur Menschen wirklich deutschen, germanischen Blutes wohnen*' (Himmler, 1942). Because of the implicit denying of the historical rights of the inferior inhabitants of the occupied territories, who had to yield to a superior race, spatial and ethnic cleansing were from the start completely intertwined. Except for those regarded racially healthy as proved by anthropological measurements, German occupation in the East would subsequently implicate a complete elimination of Jews, Slavs and other 'racially unwanted' people, the enslaving of inferior Poles, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians, and a spatial wiping out of all non-Gothic traces.

Tragically, this Nazi racial/spatial occupation policy created a transmittable model with much staying power. For, whereas the Netherlands after a long public debate abstained from their initial reparation plan of an annexation of Germany's western borderlands (Bosma, 1993, 212-213), the Poles were not inclined towards giving up their claims on Germany's eastern

territories. In fact, they were in 1945 convinced (as the German supporters of Heim im Reich in 1939) of the 'historical justice' of their homecoming in the annexed territory of Eastern Prussia, which was mythologized as the 10th-century Piast Poland and thoroughly Polonized (Meng, 2011, 131). Although this Polish *myśl zachodnia* (Western thought) was rooted as much as the German *Ostforschung* in 19th century romantic nationalism, it appealed strongly to new 'Jagiellonian' and 'Piast' intellectuals wanting to counter Nazism with comparable means (Piskorski, 2005). Yet even far outside the spatial borders of the Holocaust the other victims of Nazism have adopted comparable spatial cleansing politics. Thus legitimizing a Zionist mapping of Palestine by historical claims on the Holy Land, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank is likewise supported by archaeological excavations and state of the art exhibition techniques (such as currently digital 3D landscape visualizations of Hebrew Israel), even though the Holocaust paradigm might also offer enough space for criticizing the creation of a new people without space (Mitchell, 2002; Weizman, 2007; Van der Laarse, 2010b).

### Hidden Continuities: From Camps to Memorial Spaces

Strangely, after the defeat of Nazi Germany the idea that art, landscape and architecture were innocent, has become prevalent in and outside post-war Germany. Only Hitler's authorship was questioned. Although German culture was permeated with *Blut und Boden* eco-fascism, and the national-socialist following was nowhere so plentiful as among the *Natur- und Denkmahlschutz* movement, no one asked for a denazification of these organizations, and no one questioned the aesthetical and scientific premises of Germany's preservationists (Gröning, 2004). Moreover, Nazi-Germany's leading architects would not only become founders of Germany's post-war spatial planning policy, but *also* of its post-war Holocaust memorial culture.

This continuity is directly approvable at Bergen-Belsen. Started as a detention camp for political prisoners and Russian war captives, this Saxon prisoner-of-war camp was taken over by the SS in 1943 for use as a Jewish concentration camp. Although not designed as an extermination camp, due to its rapid expansion because of the death marches from Auschwitz-Birkenau during the first months of 1945, more than half of the 60,000 Jewish inmates died of typhus and malnutrition. Hundreds of photos testify of the horror of dead bodies all over the camp area at its liberation. Yet after the British burned all the remnants to prevent the spread of diseases, nothing was left except a bare plain with bulldozed mass graves (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001).

Figure 15.5 Hübötter, blueprint 1946



Nonetheless, Bergen-Belsen was not completely forgotten. Immediately after the clearing of the camp, the British military government forced Saxony's provincial administration to erect 'an appropriate memorial'. This would lead to the so-called Obelisk and the Inscription Wall (1947). But Major-General Button also ordered 'to prepare plans for the fencing of the mounds [and] for the setting of a suitable garden to embellish the sites' (as quoted in Staats, 2008, 185). This work was only finished after the closing of the British Displaced Persons camp, where thousands of stateless Jews had been waiting up to 1952 for their emigration to the United States and Israel.

Remarkably, though, in spite of Jewish protests, the regional Saxon authorities attracted Himmler's leading architect Hübötter, the creator of Sachsenhain, for the planning of Bergen-Belsen's memorial landscape (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001). In several sketches he aimed at a complete transformation of the former camp area, by then officially recognized as Europe's greatest Jewish graveyard, into a pastoral landscape park. Although Hübötter had to stop his work in 1946 because of Jewish criticism of his attitude to Nazi Germany (and because of his own discord about the involvement of Jewish survivors in the design process), the result six years later showed a close resemblance to his original plan.



Hübötter himself seemed to have been well aware of the challenge offered by this unique commission for Germany's greatest national war memorial. He even corrected the borders of the camp area for a better use as a memorial space that would stimulate a sublime experience of *vanitas* among visitors, and staged the mass graves as a sort of prehistoric burial mounds, covered with Saxon heath. For Hübötter, who spoke literally of the Bergen-Belsen monument as 'a sensation' (as cited in Fibisch, 1999, 140), it was foremost a second Sachsenhain, memorializing another genocide of unparalleled proportion by means of nature and stones.

Thus Bergen-Belsen's redesign as a memorial camp cannot be explained exclusively by the need for a site of mourning among its survivors. From the very beginning the unique development from a concentration camp into a memoryscape represented a specific German idea of Nordic landscaping, according to the rules of Lange and Wiepking as prescribed in the Nazi *Handbuch für Friedhofsgärtner* of 1940. One could even claim that in the late 1940s, Hübötter realized at Bergen-Belsen Himmler's wish of a decade earlier to wipe out the traces of mass destruction by transforming SS camp areas after the Final Solution into natural resorts. Using exclusively native plants, heath, trees (a lot of oak) and natural stone, its staging and texture was, in other words, based on the principles of 'landscape architecture swastika' (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001, 288).

Probably, this Germanizing of the Bergen-Belsen memorial explains also why German public opinion, in spite of strong opposition at the opening ceremony in 1952 against the propagated Nuremberg idea of collective guilt, was prepared to accept its existence as a national symbol of the German catastrophe. Nonetheless, as a *Fremdkörper* with thousands of dead bodies of mostly foreign Jews and Russians, Bergen-Belsen soon became a symbol of silence – an unwanted thorn in Germany's revived national consciousness in the restoration-period (Staats, 2008). Until Ronald Reagan's controversial visit to the German military cemetery Bitburg and Bergen-Belsen in 1985, the memorial camp was almost forgotten. Although Europe's largest Jewish graveyard, Bergen-Belsen at that time was chiefly appropriated by British soldiers as a sort of veteran heritage, and remembered only by a small group of former political prisoners and Jewish survivors (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001, 276; Young, 1993, 49).

Did we too easily believe the myth of the unpolitical professional, as propagated by Adolf Speer and other 'gentle' planners? Up to the end of Nazism these *Fachleute* had never been opposed to Hitlerism. Most of them were strong believers in the eternal power of Nazi memorials and monuments, which according to Hitler as *Worte aus Stein* would speak to



future generations until long after the fall of the Third Reich (as quoted in Weihsmann, 1998, 19; and compare MacDonald, 2006). This goes not only for fascists like Meyer, Wiepking and Hübötter but also for a former socialist like Walter Christaller, who switched to the Nazi party in 1940 when summoned by Meyer to his Berlin SS Planning office for the occupied territories for the applying of his Central Place Theory (1933), which was considered an application of the *Führerprinzip im Raumordnung*. As planning was the essence of national socialism, as it was for Stalinist communism, Himmler's *Ostkolonisation* was a challenge to test his theories under the unique conditions of a Blitzkrieg (Rössler, 1989; Aly & Heim, 2004 [1991], 156-159). Nonetheless, the so-called 'Christaller model' was also pragmatically applied by the Netherland's Service for Spatial Planning in the newly reclaimed Noordoostpolder after 1942, which therefore has been described as a *Westkolonisation* (Bosma, 1993, 203-12). Yet even considering the gap between the utopian visions and technocratic practices of Himmler's Berlin academics and the brutal murdering by the SS *Sonderkommandos* at the local level, the conclusion must be that there would have been no Holocaust in the eastern territories without these armchair planners (Browning, 2007, 240-24, 325).

Though according to one of Himmler's biographers, Meyer and Heydrich represented the intertwined positive and negative side of the SS policy of ethnic cleansing, it was Meyer's planning office that transformed Himmler's agrarian utopianism into 'hard' geopolitics. In addition, Meyer as head of the SS Planning Service was also directly involved in Heydrich's Final Solution policy when summoned by Himmler on his inspection to the Baltics to increase the pace of the Jewish destruction (Breitman, 2005, 232, 286-289). Yet Meyer was only sentenced at the Nuremberg Trials for his SS leadership position and not for war crime, due to Hübötter's, Christaller's and Wiepking's 'whitewash-papers' that stresses his '*ausgesprochene Friedensarbeit*' (as quoted in Gutschow, 2001, 185). Accepting their statements that Meyer's Master Plan East would have consisted only of purely theoretical *Wunschbildplanungen* (utopian plans), no one at that time was able to comprehend the dimension of the involvement of Himmler's scholars in the Holocaust.

Yet, the awareness of the ideological character of Germany's agricultural and landscape policy dated not only from the 1960s, but existed already in the Weimar Republic when the Jewish socialist landscape planner Georg Pniower strongly opposed Wiepking's demand for a 'nordification' of German landscape architecture, which according to him would result in a bizarre throwback to the Ice Age. Interestingly, whereas Wiepking

after Hitler's rise to power took over with Meyer's support the chair of Erwin Barth, the main representative of the leftist German people's park movement who committed suicide in 1933, it was Pniower who took over in 1951 Wiepking's Berlin chair of landscape architecture in the Russian war zone. Thus, during the Cold War the old rivalry continued when in the 1950s Wiepking, Meyer and Hübötter were appointed in the western zone as professors at the new department of planning and landscape architecture at the Technical University Hannover. In addition, former Nazi ideologist Gustave Alinger was appointed as the new chair of Agriculture at the Technical University in West-Berlin, SS archaeologist Schäfer became curator of the *Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum*, and Jankuhn finished his career as a respected dean of Göttingen's philosophy department (Gröning, 2002, 130). Only Christaller opted for a position of independent scholar after switching from the Nazi party to the Communist party in 1945 and later to the Social Democrats. Yet his central place model was up to the 1960s the paradigm for spatial planning in Western Germany under the command of his friend Emil Meynen, who from 1941 to 1943 had directed the racial 'mapping' of Russia in the interest of the SS and *Wehrmacht* cleansing operations.

Actively involved in the landscaping of the *Bundesautobahnen*, the reconstruction of bombed cities and German landscape planning, Hübötter and others stuck not only to their Teutonic principles – packaged now in a 'western' functional technocratic idiom, but also remained loyal to their fascist comrades. Thus Auschwitz's former landscape architect Max Fischer graduated in 1951 by the designer of Sachsenhain and Bergen-Belsen on Auschwitz's *Grünplanung*, while Auschwitz's city planner Max Fischer was appointed in the same position in Hannover (Gutschow, 2001, 188-189). A remarkable irony of German 20th century history was also that the same historians who contributed with their *Ostforschung* to the Nazi deportations of Poles and Jews, like Theodor Schieder, were after 1945 researching the deportations of German *Heimatvertriebenen* from East-Central Europe at the command of the West-German authorities (Haar, 2005). A 'return to normalcy' as it was called in the case of Meynen's colleague Leibbrandt, who after being actively involved in mass killings in Ukraine, during the Cold War exchanged his racial anti-Slavism for western anti-Communism (Schmaltz & Sinner, 2005, 53).

Now, if nature and architecture are – like Hitler's art – not that innocent and unpolluted by political ideologies, wouldn't this mean that Germany's familiar Nordic landscapes could easily become an unwanted heritage in the context of the painful process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*? Far from the success story made of it later, it was in many ways an *Erbgut* changed

into an *Erblast*. Thus Berlin and Hannover scholars have only during the last decades critically rejected their predecessors' blood-and-soil essentialism, while the Berlin Humboldt University has in 2002 officially recognized its responsibility for Himmler's planning office for *Generalplan Ost* (Erklärungen, 2002). So, I think the uncomfortable conclusion of all of this is that when it comes to landscape, the rupture between Nazism and Democracy was not as great as has often been thought. Or to put it differently, the post-war continuity of Hitler's taste was at least as problematic as that of 'Hitler's elites' (Frei, 2004).

### Through the Eyes of the Perpetrators?

Thus we may wonder: do the camps still speak? Up to the 1970s, not only in Germany and Poland but also in the Netherlands, Austria, France and elsewhere, most former camps had disappeared or become isolated, forgotten places (Van Vree & Van der Laarse, 2009). Of the approximately 9000 to 15,000 – 20,000 (depending on the criteria used) Nazi camps in occupied Europe from British Alderney to Belorussia (including 24 main camps with a total of 1000 subcamps), only ten of them are transformed after the war – and mostly only after 1989 – into memory sites (Milton, 2001, 268; Benz & Distel, 2005, 7-12). Yet even this process of monumentalization would not end the stripping of authentic remnants such as barracks and crematoria. They basically came to share a certain Holocaust texture of memory (Young, 1993; Van Vree, 1995; Hijink, 2011) though this staging of memorial places should not be understood only in the context of the post-1989 Holocaust memory boom, but also in that of the pre-war German Totenkult (Mosse, 1990; Koselleck & Jeismann, 1994).

The influence of the German landscape design tradition is even recognizable at Treblinka, where the camp area is transformed from a 'non-place' into a penetrating memorial with the famous memorial monument of 1959-1964, designed in granite by the Polish sculptor Adam Haupt and the architect Franciszek Dusenko. By its dimensions, naturalness, isolation and the choice of 17,000 boulders with inscriptions, symbolizing the vanished Jewish *sjtetls*, accompanied by a symbolic railway, the 'Stones of Treblinka' are generally held as one of the most impressive statements of the heritage of loss (Young, 1993, 185-92; Van Vree, 2006). Nonetheless, the similarity with Sachsenhain is too obvious to attach much value to the statement of the designers that their much copied idea of memorial stones was derived from a Jewish burial tradition.

Because of its early musualization Bergen-Belsen in particular attracted much attention from camp designers, such as in the case of the former Dutch transit camp Westerbork. No remnants of barracks or crematoria were left here after the destruction of the camp around 1970, which was at that time in use under the name of Schattenberg as a dwelling place for Moluccan immigrants from the former Dutch Indies. After being demolished the camp area changed into a sort of natural park, owned by the State's Forestry Service, though signified as a memorial by Ralph Prince's Westerbork monument symbolizing the transports by a broken railway. Although still an empty, pastoral space, critics spoke about the danger of Disneyfication after Westerbork's campsite was redesigned in 1992 with symbolic mounds at the location of the foundations of some lost barracks, a stone railroad track like in Treblinka, and other symbolic Holocaust art, such as the 102,000 stones symbolizing the Dutch-Jewish victims of the Holocaust put on transport to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and Sobibor (Mulder, 1993; Van der Laarse, 2010a).

It may seem a somewhat awkward metaphor in the context of what happened in such memorial spaces, but one could state that the incorporation of the camps into Europe's national landscapes of memory was only possible after a new phase of spatial cleansing. For after the Nazi *Ordnungswahn* most Holocaust memorials share a sort of symbolic emptiness, as referring to loss and absence (Van der Laarse, 2011). In contrast to the horrifying images of the camps made by allied photographers, the evocation of the past by the use of authentic buildings and story-making was in Bergen-Belsen, Westerbork and elsewhere for long opposed by authorities and Jewish interest groups. Only by what Marcuse has described for Dachau from the late 1960s as a symbolic repossession by the victims of Nazism, these former terrorscape would soon become 'victims of tourism' (Marcuse 2001, and compare Naeff 2014). Yet one could argue that exactly because of this, these 'perilous places' could be transformed into national mnemonic spaces (Milton, 2001, 257-258). And this was happening not only in the West but also in the East, as might be indicated by the impressive war and camp memorials of Bogdan Bogdanovic in Tito Yugoslavia, such as his Jasenovac monument (1966) and the Dudik memorial park in Vukovar (1978) (Van der Laarse, 2013b; Baillie 2013). Thus the loss of 'guilty' architecture sacralized the camps as memorial parks that offered survivors a possibility for reconciliation, based on the false assumption that art and nature are innocent.

Yet the post-1989 memory boom also witnessed a growing unease with this rustic staging of Holocaust memorials. Not only authentic places but also symbolic monuments have been questioned because of their pastoral texture. Thus the Hyde Park Holocaust memorial stone in London of 1993,

which is placed in the same way as Bergen-Belsen's obelisk as a monument in a 'beautiful garden setting', provoked protest against its 'disgusting' and 'unworthy' natural setting. For how could one appreciate a huge megalith boulder with the inscription 'Holocaust Memorial Park' in the knowledge that this picturesque image should commemorate the dark hole of modern history? (Cooke, 2000). 'An ironic perversion of the idea of the pastorate', as James Young judges in the case of a comparable Holocaust Memorial in San Francisco (Young, 1993, 311-318).

'Following in the Footsteps of the Perpetrators' is the name of a 21st-century tour in Buchenwald (Azaryahu, 2003), while the webpage makers of LeedsWIKI are following Karl Höcker's photo album by looking through the eyes of the men and women named Nazi guards (2010), and at Westerbork's camp site the only authentic remnant left, the camp commander's villa is turned in 2015 into a new museum space that offers visitors the experience of looking at the camp through the eyes of SS *Obersturmführer* Albert Gemmeker, whose main hobby was as one could expect: gardening. This growing interest in 'authorship' no longer identifies only with victims, but might also be offering challenging 'hot' interpretations (Uzzel & Ballentyne, 1998) of perpetrator's perspectives, which may help us to become aware

Figure 15.6 English Holocaust memorial in London Hyde Park



of the fatal attraction of our Holocaust heritagescapes, so closely akin to Nazi landscapes.

At this point the Chapman brothers' terrifying hell of Nazism will not bring us any further in explaining the fatal attraction of Hitler's art and Himmler's nature (Van der Laarse, 2009). For not only the camps were ideologically authored, so are these postwar 'guilty landscapes' – an anthropomorphism coined by the Dutch artist Armando to reframe the woods nearby the former camp site of his hometown Amersfoort (Armando *et al.*, 1980). Probably nothing evokes this 'unwanted beauty' of Holocaust representation (Kaplan, 2007) more than the 'Teutonic' art works of Anselm Kiefer and Joseph Beuys. Their *Hermanns-Slacht* (1977) and *Seven Thousand Oaks* (1984) provoked the British-Jewish admirer with Lithuanian roots Simon Schama to ask how much of this poetic *Waldsterben* we can afford without being tempted by moral blindness? (Schama, 1995, 134-149). Put otherwise, these 'anti-fascist, fascist landscapes' confront us with the uncomfortable possibility that Nazism still 'speaks'. Reframing the blood and soil metaphor in a new notion of the perpetrator's absence, these mystical, organic, decaying images composed of oaks and boulders mask the horrible sublime behind the fatal attraction of the innocent picturesque. For behind our nostalgic gaze upon historical landscapes lurk the traumascapes of modern society.

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## 16 A Biography for an Emerging Urban District

Discovering Open Spaces in the Former Carlsberg Breweries, Copenhagen

*Svava Riesto*

### Abstract

Abandoned industrial sites are often the starting point for urban redevelopment, forcing the involved actors to discuss which qualities are discarded, protected, and reused. Landscape biography can qualify such negotiation and ultimately influence how industrial sites are dealt with. The following is a case study of the ongoing redevelopment of the Carlsberg brewery in Copenhagen. The author emphasizes open spaces as important elements in the brewery's emergence, and as possibly valuable figures for its future development. By bridging knowledge from the humanities and the design disciplines, deeper knowledge of the complex and often unseen open spaces of industry can be gained.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, urban space design, industrial heritage, open space, urban redevelopment

### Introduction

The city always changes. Urban projects are interventions in the city's dynamics. Each urban project alters a part of the city – its materiality and contexts and how we perceive and understand it. Heritage experts and designers involved in such processes constantly make choices as to which qualities of a site are discarded or reused and how this happens. These assessments and the values that they are based on are, however, not always articulated and openly discussed.

Much of the urban development in Europe today takes place on sites that are already built; it is urban *re*-development. Often, the starting points are abandoned industrial sites, and that entails a special challenge; while old factories, massive warehouses or rusty train tracks have become widely recognized as beautiful, significant, and easily reusable, large parts of such



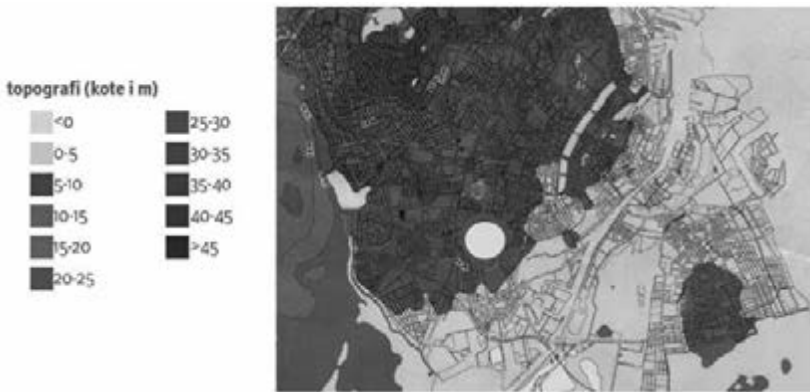
sites are often automatically rejected as something that cannot potentially have value. Industrial distribution spaces, transportation networks, and young production buildings, for instance, tend to escape attention in professional surveys during redevelopment. Such blind alleys are unnecessarily narrow and may prevent us from discovering qualities that can enrich the future city.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, industrial remnants have increasingly become protected as heritage. In Denmark industrial buildings began to be protected as heritage in the 1980s, which is a bit later than many other Northern European countries (Braae, 2003; Jørgensen, 2003a; Jørgensen, 1991; Selmer, 2007; Sestoft & Elgstrøm, 1985). However, as the Carlsberg example will show, we still lack tools, methods and concepts to recognize many qualities of large-scale industrial sites.

The architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has mostly been protected on the scale of each building, while the urban scale and open spaces have been heavily underexposed in heritage management (Prudon, 2005 and Docomomo, 2008). Yet, urban sites and open spaces have been a growing concern in heritage protection since the Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964). In Denmark, for instance, the Legislation on Listed Buildings was revised in 1966, so that not only a building but also its proximate open spaces could be listed. All over Europe different concepts, legislations and survey methods for addressing open spaces and entire urban sites have been developed; such as the German and Dutch concepts 'Ensemble' and 'biotope'. In Denmark, urban sites have been framed with the concept '*Kulturmiljø*', which was launched in the late 1980s as a bridge between environmental, cultural and aesthetic perspectives on heritage. The Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment (SAVE) was developed in order to grasp urban sites rather than singular buildings in local preservation (Algreen Ussing, 1992). The SAVE method encourages consideration of historical environments and their open spaces during planning and it was first developed in studies of pre-modern towns (Riesto, 2011A and 2011B). The SAVE method encourages the search for certain aspects, such as visual axes, which can be found in pre-modern towns. The qualities that are particular to sites for the mass production and distribution of goods, on the other hand, can be hard to grasp with the SAVE method in its present form (Riesto, 2011a and 2011b). Many qualities of the industrial landscape thus easily become overlooked.

The above may sound like a tribute to the accelerating growth of heritage. In the last five or so decades, more and more objects have become targets for heritage protection for several reasons, one of them a wish to make this field less reductive and include traces of workers, women and

Figure 16.1 Copenhagen Topography



Carlsberg (circle) is situated on one out of few elevations in this flat coastal city – on a moraine called Valby Hill that slopes 18 meters towards the north-east.  
Diagram Vogt Landscape Architects

Figure 16.2 Carlsberg Brewery Site in Copenhagen



The Carlsberg site is a conglomerate of layers from different time-periods. The highest part of the Hill (front), has buildings and open spaces of different sizes and shapes and two large landscape gardens from the 19th century (left and right). The lowest part is characterized by large rectangular buildings and expansive asphalt surfaces from the 20th century (back). The white line shows the property border.

Photo courtesy Carlsberg Ltd Properties

other non-dominant groups (Kolen, 2006; Smith, 2006; Ashworth, 2005; Jensen, 2008; Paludan-Müller, 2003). This chapter is not a plea for retaining every bit and piece of the industrial landscape. Rather, it is an attempt to deepen the ground for intervening in industrial sites. When we imagine what the city can become we always relate back to something that is already known – creativity evolves in dialogue with previous solutions. Knowing the physical environment that is actually here better, then – and that includes seemingly non-aesthetic industrial sites – can thus give professionals and users a broader range of possibilities, both to create a shared heritage and to shape, use and experience tomorrow's city. But how can such a widened appreciation of industrial sites be developed?

This chapter presents a landscape biography of Carlsberg – a former brewery in central Copenhagen and one of the most ambitious and complex urban redevelopment projects in Northern Europe in these years. By way of this case study, I attempt to explore how landscape biography can deepen the basis on which professionals intervene in urban transformation processes. This biography analyses the transitory situation from gated production plant to urban district in the intense period of planning between 2006 and 2009. Numerous surveys of Carlsberg were made in these years, which open up the possibility of a broad range of site-readings and possible interventions.

The biography opens with an introduction to the Carlsberg site and those readings of it that have been most dominant in the urban project. Then, two alternative surveys are presented. Based on perspectives in these surveys, I then study the transformative history of this site. Finally, the prospective of landscape biography for former industrial urban redevelopment sites is discussed.

## **The Carlsberg Site – Seen and Overlooked**

The Carlsberg brewery was founded in 1847 in what was then a rural area outside Copenhagen. The site is situated on one of the few elevations in this flat coastal city – on a moraine called Valby Hill (figure 16.1). The brewery has been continuously extended and rearranged, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became increasingly surrounded by the city. Carlsberg appears as a conglomerate of a large variety of built structures and open spaces and two large landscape gardens on the highest elevations to the west (figure 16.2). To the west, the highest part of the hill, are buildings and open spaces of different sizes and shapes and two large landscape gardens from the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. The eastern part is characterized by large rectangular buildings and expansive asphalt surfaces from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Not only a brewery, but also farms, dwellings, and several firms have resided here, some of which merged into the Carlsberg Breweries during the last century. Since 2006, the site has been planned as an urban district with a mix of housing, retail and cultural institutions. The world-wide enterprise Carlsberg Ltd, which still owns these founding premises, has commissioned a 'vibrant urban district' in which the 'spirit of the place' is reinforced (Carlsberg Ltd., 2006, 6). Carlsberg Ltd. organized a highly promoted international ideas competition to which some 221 design teams from 35 different countries responded (Carlsberg Ltd., 2006, 6). The winning proposal by Danish Entasis architects became the master plan for the urban project. Simultaneously, the Heritage Agency of Denmark classified the Carlsberg Breweries as the first Industrial Site of National Significance, and carried out a survey with the intent to list selected buildings and gardens prior to the construction of the new buildings (The Heritage Agency of Denmark, 2009).

In the summer of 2008, architects from Entasis, along with representatives from Carlsberg Ltd., the Heritage Agency of Denmark, and Copenhagen City's planning department, spent a week walking the site together. The urgent goal was to agree on what to acknowledge as valuable and preserve during the realization of the new master plan, which prescribed 60,000 m<sup>2</sup> of new buildings here. On-site negotiation was new to everyone in the group and one out of numerous new forms of collaboration in this urban project.

The group walked from one building to the next and their task of negotiating values often appeared straightforward. For example, at the point illustrated in figure 16.3, they all agreed that a 19th-century chimney was worth preserving, apparently without a need to articulate why. The chimney to the left, a 1970s structure more than twice as tall that is visible from the city, was not explicitly assessed. One member of the group, however, a cultural historian and advisor to the municipal planners, argued that the tall chimney should be retained, too, because it had played an important role for Carlsberg's power production. However, the rest of the group hastily rejected her appreciation. In fact, the representative from Carlsberg Ltd. questioned the value of retaining either one of the chimneys. 'If a chimney is preserved', he asked, 'who is going to own it? Who will ensure maintenance?'

From the perspective of the architects of the master plan and the restoration architects – who together formed the majority of the group and did not articulate their arguments – the old chimney with ornaments was considered beautiful and thus valuable. From the perspective of a

Figure 16.3 Two Chimneys Evaluated



When a group of designers and representatives from the Heritage Agency of Denmark assessed the Carlsberg redevelopment site, all agreed that the decorated 19th century chimney (bottom of page) was worth preserving, apparently without a need to articulate why. The high chimney (top of page) was largely ignored.

Photo by the author

historian, both chimneys were appreciated because they can equally document a technological development. From the fiscal perspective of the owner and potential investors, the value of both chimneys was questioned.

I looked from a special perspective as well. As someone working in the field of landscape architecture, I turned and walked around, curious about the parking lot that we were in: a wide-open terrace with an inviting view. The space is paved with asphalt and enclosed by vegetation on two sides, a row of chestnut trees on one side and shrubs on the other. A row of different buildings creates an interesting wall of niches that relate this enormous space to the scale of the human body. But like the young chimney, such open spaces were not widely recognized by the assessment group.

### Overlooked Spaces

Three observations from this on-site workshop are striking. First, each professional applied a specialist perspective that allowed him or her to grasp particular aspects of the site. By combining insights obtained in different fields (technological-historical, architectural-historical, bodily, perspectives concerning reuse, etc.), I hypothesize, we can discover more about this site. Industrial sites are complex and contain multiple physical and intangible layers. If we can enhance the understanding of how various layers, for instance, of different actors and time-periods, interrelate, then professionals in urban redevelopment processes can be better able to spot potential that is otherwise unseen.

The second observation from the Carlsberg on-site workshop is this: an old built structure with ornaments was much more likely to be recognized than one from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is striking, since approximately half of the surface of the Carlsberg site bears significant marks from the period after 1950. This automatic prioritization of the oldest history repeats the interest expressed in most of the literature about these breweries (Glamann, 1995, 1990a & b; Zanker-von Meyer, 1982). Also, the public perception of the site has been preoccupied with 19<sup>th</sup>-century history, in particular with the first brewers J.C. Jacobsen (1811-1887) and Carl Jacobsen (1842-1914). These fascinating directors have played a central role in Danish cultural, political, and technological history and narratives about them are part of the company's promotion on the Danish beverages market (Carlsberg Ltd., 2006). Carlsberg's storytelling goes well with the established practices for

heritage surveys, which encourage professionals to associate what is oldest with the highest value. The Danish law for listing buildings, for example, only deals with objects older than 50 years, although there are a few exceptions. Such mechanisms of downscaling young history are striking, since most of the Danish industrial sites are heavily marked by development after 1945 (Dansk Bygningsarv, 2011).

The third observation: while the Carlsberg assessment group explicitly approached many built objects, open spaces – that connect the buildings – went relatively unnoticed. The group walked a route that relied on a tacit understanding of the site as a collection of built objects. This is paradoxical, since urban space is an important part of the plan for the new Carlsberg district (Entasis, 2007 and 2008; Copenhagen Municipality, 2009). The plan relies on the idea that a vivid urban district does not solely evolve from well-functioning buildings, but that attractive urban spaces are crucial.

The assessment group did, however, note some of Carlsberg's existing open spaces. It was never said or discussed why the group took a closer look at some open spaces and not others, but certain principles can be deduced. Those spaces that were discussed were enclosed by hedges, walls or buildings, so that they could be dealt with as entities with clear distinctions. They were prominent squares and gardens made to represent the breweries. Most of these spaces are characterized by an axial relationship to ornamented buildings; a straight line can be drawn on a plan from the façade through the space. This spatial organization principle – enclosed axial spaces – is rare in the Carlsberg area. There may be other kinds of open spaces that can be unravelled by another kind of investigation, which will be tested in this article.

## Landscape Biography for Urban Redevelopment Sites

The following study presupposes that no open spaces are indistinct, including industrial parking lots and distribution zones. Rather, open spaces are always organized according to certain formation processes. Investigating such processes can allow us to discover other qualities. In an attempt to reappraise open spaces of industrial sites, this chapter is informed by Dutch research in landscape biography (Roymans *et al.*, 2009, Kolen, 2005; Roymans, 1995; Van der Knaap & Van der Valk, 2006). There are four arguments for the relevance of a landscape-biographical approach here.

First, the Dutch researchers have demonstrated the potential of transgressing specialist fields and developed concepts to understand landscapes



as relational constructs. Second, landscape biography is not an isolated academic history. Instead, the aim is to carry out applied research that can at the same time contribute to the present-day transformation of landscapes and also critique the practices that are currently in use. Being reflexive and at the same time participating is not without difficulty. However, such a double perspective is productive if we want to qualify the redevelopment projects that are going on, whether researchers engage directly with such projects or not. Third, as indicated in the term biography, from the Greek *bios* (life), this research tradition provides a productive way to acknowledge that the environment always changes, which is a fruitful perspective for heritage protection (Kolen, 2005; Tietjen *et al.*, 2007). Landscape biography puts change at the centre of attention and enables a combination of different synchronic and diachronic perspectives at once. Fourth, Dutch landscape biographers provide a productive framework for studying industrial sites as layered; imprints from different time periods intertwine in complex ways that may be characterized by reuse, durability, reordering, repetition or

Figure 16.4 Masterplan



Entasis' master plan turns the brewery into a dense fabric of block-buildings and high-rises. Those buildings enclose narrow streets and trapezoid squares and have publicly accessible functions like cafés and shops on ground level.

Entasis Architects

rapid change. Industrial sites are not only layered in terms of time, but are also affected by multiple actors, which sometimes conflict.

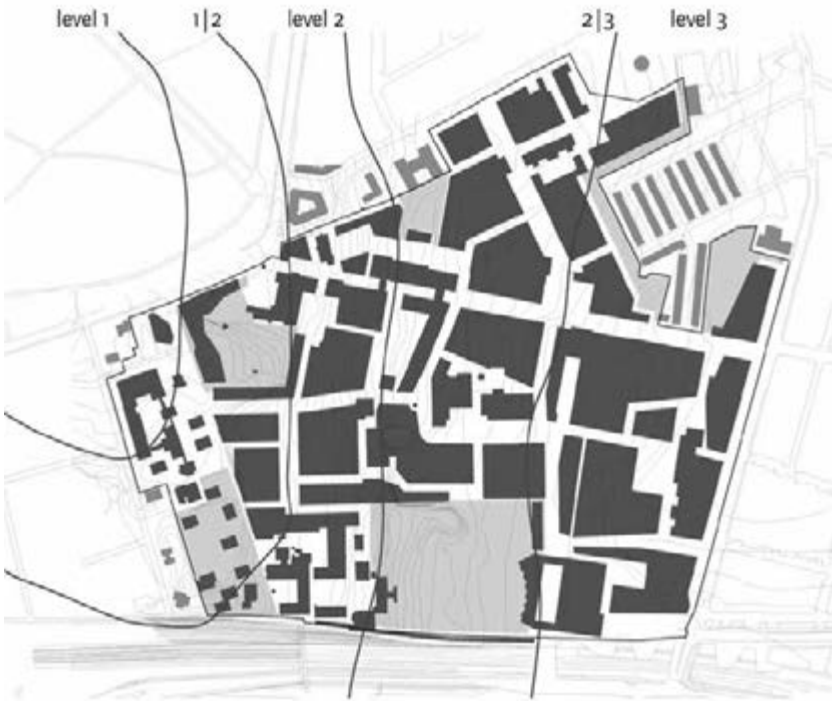
Landscape biography implies to engage with a broad range of sources; the materiality of the present site, historical and contemporary representations, archive records, cultural-historical literature, heritage acts, planning documents and more (see Ronnes, Chapter 9). I hereby explore how this investigatory framework can be applied to industrial sites with special focus on their open spaces.

This chapter argues that pulling together insights from the design disciplines with cultural-historical perspectives is productive because they can illuminate different aspects. Doing this I presuppose that design proposals are not autonomous invention, but produce situational knowledge (Von Seggern *et al.*, 2008; Tietjen, 2011; Prominski, 2004). Architects, landscape architects, and urban designers often apply heuristic strategies that are not explicitly articulated to outsiders, and not necessarily reflected upon systematically (Schön, 1983). Nevertheless, design proposals – both those built and those never realized – can be considered as investigations of a specific site. Site survey and design intervention are two sides of the same coin.

### Carlsberg: An Unexpected Turn

The Carlsberg master plan prescribed a vivid city district with ‘classical urban activities’ like shopping, events, dining and more (Copenhagen Municipality, 2009, Part II, 30). The plan turns the plant into a dense fabric of block-buildings and high-rises with publicly accessible functions at ground level (figure 16.4). Density is vital to this plan, and Entasis argues that it can contribute to an ecologically sustainable city where car traffic is reduced because of short distances (Entasis Architects, 2007). Furthermore, the architects argue that a dense city fabric also contributes to the desired urbanity; narrow streets and plazas can enhance a populated and pleasant atmosphere, like in the historical cores of Copenhagen, San Gimignano or Rome.

What kind of reading of the existing Carlsberg site is implicit in this plan? Entasis applies a conception of the city in which some types of urban form – the narrow square – can encourage a desired atmosphere and other types – the extensive open space – are problems that must be removed. This view is in line with a dichotomy established in the post-war critique of modern architecture (Cullen, 1961; Gehl, 1971; Riesto, 2011b). Entasis’s perception went well with Carlsberg Ltd.’s goal of profiting economically

**Figure 16.5** Landscape Plan

In this Landscape Plan Carlsberg is split into three areas, in which urban spaces should be designed according to different principles and by means of different materials. These parts relate to the terrain elevation.

Vogt Landscape Architects

from the urban project. Building on the large spaces would make them attractive to trade.

In 2008 the financial crisis hit Carlsberg Ltd.'s brewing activities and the board no longer supported the announced construction of new buildings on the Copenhagen premises. The realization of the master plan was suspended and Carlsberg Ltd. began to look for co-investors. Many of Carlsberg's existing buildings currently function as offices, galleries and cultural institutions on short-term renting contracts, allowing new user groups to appropriate this formerly restricted production area. As I write, Carlsberg has found investors for some of the areas.

With the recession in 2008, the established scenario of a fast growing and populated urban district became difficult to sell. Alternative stories about the future Carlsberg seemed necessary to support the urban project.

Although not constructing any buildings on this site yet, Carlsberg Ltd. was commissioning architects to design certain houses and open spaces, so that realization could move ahead as soon as funding was established. In 2008 Carlsberg Ltd. asked the Swiss landscape architecture office Vogt to make an overall design for the urban spaces in the new district. While Entasis had already defined where the main plazas and streets should be, Vogt's task was to further detail the quality of those spaces. In the landscape plan that they came up with, Vogt illuminates layers of Carlsberg that were underexposed.

### Design Survey I – Topography

Vogt's main idea is to split the site into three different parts. The urban spaces in each of these parts are then designed using distinct materials (figure 16.5). The separation is not due to different phases in the history of the breweries, or to the functions in the future district. Instead, those three parts relate to three elevations of Carlsberg's terrain slope.

Figure 16.6 Urban Space Concept



The lowest level will have squares with dynamic, fluctuating water reminding of tidal changes, as in the photos shown here. On the highest level, water is planned to appear in the urban spaces as springs or pools that collect rainwater. The middle level is a zone with steady water in canals and basins.

Vogt Landscape Architects

These levels determine the appearance of vegetation, stone and water in this design concept. For example, on the highest level street trees and vegetation in urban spaces will be species that can be found on high natural altitudes around the world, such as sugar maple and Scots pine. The mid-elevation is planned with species from middle altitudes, e.g. oak and lime, while the lowest level is designed with vegetation typical of low-lying and coastal areas, such as ash and birch. This selection does not refer to actual botanical requirements and has no immediate connection to the existing vegetation on this site, but instead narrates that this is a hill.

Similarly, water is treated differently on each level. On the highest level, water is planned to appear in the urban spaces as springs or pools that collect rainwater. The middle level is a zone with steady water in canals and basins; while the lowest level will have squares with dynamic, fluctuating water reminiscent of tidal changes (figure 16.6). Some of these water basins are to be connected by pipes to recycle water and prepare the site for urban storm water, which is a growing challenge due to climate changes. Such aspects are not only solved technically, but also communicated by the different appearances of water in this plan.

With this plan Vogt introduces a reading of Carlsberg that elevates topography as a binder and main characteristic of this diverse site. This provides an alternative to the perceptions in the on-site workshop, which focused on selected objects: old buildings and enclosed, prominent spaces. Vogt's scope inspired the following biographical investigation into Carlsberg's sloping terrain, starting with two simple questions: what characterizes Carlsberg's terrain in the present? And how did it come to be this way?

## Landscape Biography of a Hill

The hilly landscape of Carlsberg is not always indicated on maps, but it is obvious to any visitor, walking upwards and downwards in a way that kinaesthetically contrasts with the way people usually move in the flat city of Copenhagen. The experience of walking up the hill is striking, not just because of the physical effort required, but because the pedestrian will pass numerous levels, slopes and retaining walls and passages between them. Many spots on the Carlsberg site allow for lingering views towards the city, and the terrain unfolds in a variety of shapes: as terraces, as stairs, and as soft or steep slopes that are emphasized by towers, sculpture and high trees. The hill is seldom regular on this site, but separates into various levels, especially in the oldest part of Carlsberg to the west.

A key to understanding these multiple levels better is to look at what exists below them. Cellars are literally the foundation of the Carlsberg breweries' early success. First Carlsberg was the only producer and later the market leader of the popular dark ('Bavarian') beer, which led to an income in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that is almost beyond comprehension. Bavarian beer requires longer fermentation than top-fermented beer and this long fermentation period was a technological challenge; the beer had to be kept from spoiling in warm summer months until cooling machines were installed at Carlsberg in 1878-1879. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Carlsberg's planners solved this problem by carving cellars that were filled with natural ice. Excavating such cellars vertically down into flat ground would have demanded many work hours. Knowing this, Carlsberg's founder decided to locate the brewery on Valby Hill so that the workers could dig into the hill. Excavating into a slope is easier and thus salary could be saved. The terrain also contributed to efficient transportation once the cellars were established; the slope could be modelled into terraces on which horses pulled barrels in and out of a cellar exit directly at road level. The brewers thus introduced a perception and use of Valby Hill as an economic asset. Fermenting and storing beer underground and the related practice of

**Figure 16.7** Carlsberg Breweries 1889



Old Carlsberg is a remarkable landscape of terraces in different shapes and sizes.  
Drawing from 1889. Courtesy Carlsberg Ltd Archive

moving barrels in and out of the cellars have determined how Valby Hill is modelled into a remarkable three-dimensional complexity on this site.

Whoever carves a cellar is left with spare soil, sand or other materials. The massive and almost continuous cellar excavations at Carlsberg have been accompanied by different ways of dealing with these extra materials, impacting heavily on the terrain. The director's villa of the first Carlsberg complex shows this clearly. It can be seen on a drawing (figure 16.7): this building is located at the very left and marked by a flag. A large landscape garden descends from this villa's garden façade. The building stands on a high base that makes it look prominent and allows for entrances on two stories, in accordance with the recommendations by the much-read villa expert J.C. Loudon (Loudon, 1833). The material for this terrain work came from cellar excavations.

At the northern side of the garden the terrain is formed into two densely planted peaks. These were planned by brewer J.C. Jacobsen, who later described them as 'mountains' and 'a considerable adornment for Carlsberg' (Glamann, 1990b, 89-90). Hills were a favoured motif in landscape gardens in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was considered attractive to place landscape gardens in places with a dramatic terrain. If this was not possible, then hills and other elements could be created. In this case, the hills were made with a large amount of spare soil after a cellar expansion in 1867. These mounds exemplify how Carlsberg's terrain has not solely been shaped according to industrial rationales. Rather, technological agendas are mixed with contemporary aesthetic ideals. The history of technology and architectural ideas can thus not be separated if we are to understand the multi-layered formation of Carlsberg's terrain.

The industrial pioneers were not the first to associate Valby Hill with special value. The first known human activities here date back to the Bronze Age, when burial mounds were created on what was then called Sun Hill, probably a place for worship (Larsen, 1989). Valby Hill later became an agricultural area that profited from the slope's wind-protected micro-climate. The Danish royal family discovered this hill in the 1600s and 1700s and erected the Frederiksberg castle and garden on its highest point. The royal family's fascination is related to ideas that spread among the privileged in Europe at the time: the elite favoured a retreat to elevated ground outside the city in what the Italians would call the Villa Sub-urbana (Magnani, 2008).

While the royal family may have enjoyed the castle as a retreat, it in fact became the beginning of an urbanization process that surrounded it with other buildings. In the 1800s the walled city of Copenhagen was a criticized



phenomenon; overpopulation epidemics, difficulties in getting fresh water, and a growing lack of space became main topics for discussion. Those who could afford it escaped and sought the fresh air beyond the city ramparts. For a generation of young merchants, artists and intellectuals, Valby Hill was a pleasant alternative to the city (Jørgensen, 2009). Valby Hill was celebrated by the cultural elite as an arcadia with ‘flowing fields of corn, wide meadows and views over Kalvebod beach’ (Nystrøm, 1942, 13). Valby Hill became the building site of multiple single-family houses with gardens, a cultural milieu, later called the Danish Golden Age, that the art-loving founders of Carlsberg inscribed themselves into a generation later. Carlsberg, then, is as much a cultural site as an industrial one. Its development is connected to changing perceptions of Valby Hill and to cultural movements. Vogt’s design project engages with this history of interpreting, using and physically altering Valby Hill, and it adds new layers to it.

## Design Survey II – Transportation Equipment

The year after Vogt’s plan, Carlsberg Ltd. commissioned another design project. In 2010 neither the planned buildings nor Vogt’s urban space design were realized. In order to ensure that this highly communicated urban project was still attractive to potential tenants and investors, Carlsberg came up with the idea of making temporary installations in the outdoors.

Figure 16.8 Urban Space Installation



In the design of Keinicke & Overgaard this shed roof becomes a “rope forest” (Rebskov) and a distinct place to play, linger and to discover.

Photo: Peter Nørby, Courtesy Carlsberg Ltd Properties

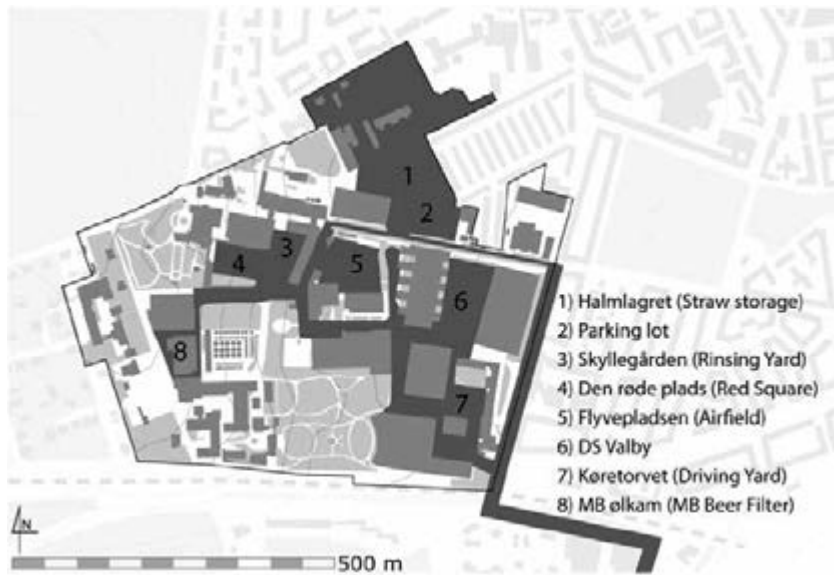
The idea was to attract people to the area and keep momentum by filling a time-gap of approximately five years, before building would begin and the long-lived project of the master plan would be realized.

The designers, a Danish architectural office called Keinicke & Overgaard, illuminated new aspects of the site. Their design intervention was not confined to those parts of Carlsberg that the master plan had destined as future urban spaces. Instead, Keinicke & Overgaard chose to intervene close to those buildings that housed the most activity: a bottling station that was reused as a dance theatre, a storage building that now functioned as a sports hall. The spaces close to these buildings had large, asphalt surfaces with thermo-plastic signals, which the designers treated as an ornament and drew more on the surface. Much of the existing equipment that was there had lost its industrial function when production closed in 2008 and was not immediately legible to the new users. The designers treated such former utilitarian structures as triggers of the imagination and reused existing equipment as sports facilities, urban furniture and ornaments. With strong colours and lighting, the designer's intervention enhances the appropriation of the brewery by the art public, people doing certain sports, young clubbers and other desirable user groups. One example is a shed roof, which becomes a 'rope forest' and a distinct place to play, linger and discover (figure 16.8). Just like the Vogt plan, this design project reveals certain layers of the Carlsberg site that have been overlooked in previous acts of the redevelopment process. Informed by this design it is relevant to further investigate: what characterizes the spaces that this project illuminates? And how did they come to be this way?

### **Landscape Biography of a Route**

On closer inspection the shed is one of many roofed areas in the youngest part of the brewery site. This part is characterized by expansive distribution spaces, where goods were stored prior to transport. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the processes of mass-produced brewing have not changed as radically as many other industries. Rather, optimizing has mainly been a matter of improving vessels and distribution. One challenge has been to protect beer on the way from the bottling station to the truck that drives it to customers. Beer easily spoils if exposed to sunlight in this process. The many roofs in eastern Carlsberg thus articulate the industrial rationales of efficient distribution.

Figure 16.9 Worker's Open Spaces



The spaces that brewery workers called by colloquial names when asked in 2008. Those named spaces were along the tanker route.

Diagram by Rikke Welan, Svava Riesto

In the late 20th century 400-700 tankers drove through Carlsberg every day. The tanker route has been highly significant in the insider's perception of Carlsberg's open spaces. As the brewery functions were still active in 2008, I asked the workers I encountered which open spaces they called by names. The places that they named and which were significant to them were all connected to functions in the process complex of the tanker route, such as storage, distribution, and transportation (figure 16.9). The space called the Airfield, for instance, is where drivers and other workers would meet and have a chat after working hours. The name is probably related to all the parked vehicles that would stand in a meticulous system on this extensive plateau in the evening and made it look a bit like an airfield. This is the parking lot with the two chimneys, visited during the on-site workshop (figure 16.3).

Like many of Carlsberg's large distribution spaces, the Airfield has a large plain surface where vehicles can drive efficiently and goods can be stored despite the hilly terrain. As transport was increasingly handled by lorries and tankers, Carlsberg's sloping terrain was pushed into small strips between the new plain surfaces. These slopes may easily be considered

**Figure 16.10** Informal Hang-outs

The green terrain slopes played a significant role in the everyday life at the breweries. They allowed for multiple short-cuts and pedestrian routes through this truck-dominated area and were green slopes were popular meeting places for Carlsberg's workers in the mid 20th century. Courtesy Carlsberg Ltd Archive

mere left-over space and go unnoticed, as they have in the recent planning of Carlsberg's redevelopment. However, on closer inspection the planted terrain strips played a significant role in the everyday life at the breweries. They allowed for multiple short-cuts and pedestrian routes through this truck-dominated area. The green slopes were popular meeting places for Carlsberg's workers, as a study of historical photos from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century showed (figure 16.10).

The workers who met here were denied access to Carlsberg's landscape gardens, which were strictly for the management, their family and honorary guests. Taking a break on the green slopes was an alternative to the controlled bodily movements along the assembly line and in other specialized activities. These strips were planted with grass and sometimes with shrubs that prevented access and the possibility of lingering. Here, the planners may have reacted to the everyday recreational use. However, the green slopes are where people moved around and where they met in the breaks, especially those slopes situated between areas for male and female workers.

Although not initially planned as such, several of the green strips turned out to have qualities as recreational spaces. They are part of the

highly differentiated spatial system of the tanker route, which provides different types of perception and use when moving around and when lingering. The complex composition of this route is not recognized if space is reduced to a hierarchy where axial prominent squares are believed to be universally better than other types of spaces, as occurred during the on-site workshop.

## Unravelling Surveys of Carlsberg

The biography showed that those open spaces overseen in the on-site workshop turned out to be constitutive elements in the formation of the Carlsberg site. This biography exemplified that by showing two spatial figures characteristic to this former brewery: Carlsberg's complex topography and the differentiated spatial system of the tanker route.

The two design concepts discussed here highlighted these aspects. It is thus relevant to ask: what is the role of landscape-biographical knowledge in urban redevelopment processes? Is the landscape biographer only writing what the designers have already done anyway? These questions require a closer look at the circumstances of those design projects.

Vogt's design for Carlsberg dealt especially with people's relationship with nature. Vogt's interest in how natural processes and human activities inter-relate informed my transformative history of Carlsberg's terrain. However, this design project is not a neutral source of information. While inscribing itself in the history of Carlsberg's topographical processes, Vogt's survey relies on certain ideas about the future city. Founding partner of the studio, Günther Vogt, elevates complexity as a valuable spatial principle that can comply with contemporary life. He also argues that the modern dualism between nature and city should be dissolved: 'The potential of the urban landscape is the city's heterogeneity [...]. Nature can be found in the city in many different forms. The development of this diversity is only possible in the heterogeneous structure' (Vogt 2006, 101).

Vogt calls for a city that offers enhanced experiences of sun, wind, rain and other climatic phenomena. This idea of what constitutes a good city is radically different from Entasis's concern with a populated atmosphere, founded on built density. Not surprisingly, the landscape architect is interested in landscape aspects. Notably, Vogt does not treat landscape as an authentic image that should be restored. Rather, landscape processes become a junction between the past and the future of this site in a conceptual

design approach that connects storm water management with the cultural history of the hill. By emphasizing topography the Swiss designers activate a set of positive associations that can be traced back centuries. The hill has been interpreted and re-interpreted in different ways. The celebration of Valby Hill is a long-lived cultural tradition, although countered by industrial distribution rationales of the tanker in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This shows that understanding urban sites means dealing with something that has already been interpreted and re-interpreted, and that those past activities influence our current ones.

And yet, Vogt's project can also be seen as a handy tool for Carlsberg Ltd. When the planned construction had been postponed, the master plan's aim of a populated urban district with commercial activities had become difficult to sell. Vogt's project introduced a new narrative connected with positive associations towards nature in general and Valby Hill in particular. The rhetoric of Vogt's project also directly corresponds with the corporate storytelling. The plan was accompanied by a written description, which included statements like: 'One man [founding director J.C. Jacobsen, ed.]. One hill. One vision' (Vogt Landscape Architects, 2010, 3).

This strong overlap between Carlsberg Ltd.'s economic interests and Vogt's ideas about a new kind of urban nature is important. It testifies that nature is not a free zone of 'good', separate from power. Instead, what we call nature is inextricably linked to human activity. Landscape biography can play a significant role here by allowing a critical discussion of the rhetoric of an urban project. I have elaborated on the potential of studying the changing topography of an industrial urban site, but that should not be considered as an absolute value.

The other aspect stressed in this biography is the tanker route. It provides an enriching alternative to the conception of space that was applied in the on-site workshop. Keinicke & Overgaard had been commissioned to keep up the pace of the urban project hit by the 2008 recession. Strong colour and light effects were activated in their designs to communicate with a hip, young and art-loving audience, who were believed to be pioneers of an economically favourable development. In this design, the route becomes a game board for appropriation by new user groups.

Keinicke & Overgaard's project relied on a hands-on physical approach that engaged creatively with some parts of the abandoned equipment. This inspired my further investigation into the spatial properties of this route. The designers had walked the site and relied on an immediate visual encounter, where they spotted some things to reuse. The biographical

investigation presented here also engaged investigatory techniques from other disciplines. The archival photos of workers' breaks showed that the largely overlooked green slopes were significant as shortcuts for travel and as social hubs for the workers, and as zones of social control. These green slopes have been ignored during the dominant steps of the redevelopment process, such as heritage inventories, design proposals and plans. Obviously the present and future users of an abandoned production area often differ radically. However, studying how previous users have acted in the space can be a key to insight into what these spaces can accommodate and how.

Naming is another example of vernacular practices. The named spaces remained largely unseen in the redevelopment. However, those spaces cover large parts of the site and provide a visitor with a succession of different spatial experiences when perceived in motion. A spatial flow like this route slips away from attention if an *a priori* preference for the historical enclosed square or axes is applied, as it was in the initial planning of Carlsberg. While axial spaces can be studied on a map, the spaces of motion, which often characterize industrial sites, require other investigatory techniques. One such technique can be studying naming and practices by vernacular actors. Those should, however, not be upheld as absolute values.

## Prospects for Future Landscape Biography

Landscape biography as conceptualized here adds important knowledge to the redevelopment of the Carlsberg breweries. Open space is a complex matter – neither surveying space nor associating it with value is straightforward. Architects, landscape architects and urban designers have developed various concepts for studying and discussing space. Design proposals can provide a richer basis for understanding open spaces beyond the canonical heritage assessment, which in the case shown here tended to favour one spatial organization principle and ignore others.

In line with the interdisciplinary tradition of landscape biography, I thus encourage a closer inter-connection between heritage protection and design practice. Including design projects as sources in a landscape biography may be key to overcoming a difficulty that has been noted in the Dutch research. While stressing the 'implementation potential in heritage management, landscape design and spatial planning' (Roymans *et al.*, 2009, 352), researchers have also described how there are obstacles



in establishing a dialogue with designers in practice (Roymans *et al.*, 352-353). By providing detailed studies of open space and by including design proposals as sources, landscape biographies can strengthen a meaningful dialogue with these important actors in reusing, redeveloping and altering the city.

Architectural proposals should, of course, not be treated as neutral sources of information. Rather, they must be discussed as to the presumptions and sets of values that they are based on. Also, the way a design commission is framed, and the formal and informal collaborations involved in a redevelopment process all affect how a site is understood and ultimately dealt with. Such analyses can allow for a reflection of how and when reductions for future acts are made, in heritage inventories, on-site negotiation, competitions, plans, and commissions. It is the job of landscape biographers to keep on reflecting on existing perspectives, reveal conflicting viewpoints and even provide knowledge about the site that is suppressed by the dominant stakeholders. Such reflection can qualify the urban redevelopment processes at different stages: the making of visions, competitions, programming, policies, design proposals, heritage surveys and more.

This biography dealt solely with heritage inventories and design proposals that were made by or for dominant stakeholders. It would be relevant to connect such perspectives with others by less dominant actors or outsiders to an urban redevelopment project. Landscape-biographical knowledge will not make a history where all can agree on a total synthesis. It can, however, be a dynamic platform to articulate and discuss tacit values, while also constantly providing new and alternative ways to understand these sites.

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# 17 Layered Landscapes

## A Problematic Theme in Historic Landscape Research

*Johannes Renes*

### **Abstract**

Within the larger theme of landscape biographies, a number of smaller themes have been explored. One of these is the metaphor of historical layers in landscapes. At first, vertical time-layers were distinguished literally by geologists and archaeologists mapping stratified sediments and buried landscapes. But one can also come across artefacts and spatial structures from different periods in a horizontal direction, making it possible to speak of horizontal layers. A third type is often described as palimpsest, when older traces shimmer through a landscape that is dominated by the relics of later developments. In practice, traces from different periods do not just lie beside or on top of each other, but are also actively given new roles, values and meanings. Examples of 'intellectual layers' are neo-styles in architecture, but also reuse of heritage. Finally, even historic objects that seem unchanged through the centuries can have 'layers of meanings' as a result of changing functions and meanings through time. It is argued that a more sophisticated use of the metaphor of historical layers leads to less simplification and therefore to improvements in heritage planning.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, landscape layers, Rome, the Netherlands, planning

### **Introduction**

In Dutch landscape studies, the biography of landscape has become a popular theme during the last decade, being used as a basic ingredient for many local studies as well as a large research programme (Kolen, 2005; Bloemers *et al.*, 2010). However, the landscape biography is not a hermetic theory, but rather an inspiring metaphor, used as an umbrella for a number of ideas that have changed the ways we look at the history of as well as the actual dealing with landscapes (see the introductory chapter of this volume). The core of this set of ideas is the vision of landscape as

an object that is handed over again and again from one generation of users to the next, in the process undergoing not only physical changes, but also changes in value and meaning. This idea is originally inspired by literature on the 'biography of things'/biography of objects (Kopytoff, 1986). The anthropologist Igor Kopytoff described how an object could build up its own life history by the way it was handed over from one owner to the other and during that process lose and gain ever new stories and meanings. An African religious object can become a holiday souvenir for a European tourist and can end up as a valued heritage object in a museum. This idea has since been adopted and adapted by, among others, landscape archaeologists (Gosden & Marshall, 1999; Kolen, 2005; Roymans, 1995; Roymans *et al.*, 2009).

This vision of landscape means that the emphasis shifts from the physical landscape itself to its users, bringing landscape studies closer to the social sciences. It also means more attention to long-term change, which was particularly new for an archaeological discipline that used to be dominated by period specialists. The stronger emphasis on the users of the landscape through time has led to an increased emphasis on the use of the past in past societies (originally developed by Bradley, 2002). And, last but not least, it has led to a redefining of the old archaeological theme of historic layers in the landscape. In the present chapter I want to elaborate on this last theme.

The concept of a layered landscape was originally developed during the 19th century by geologists and archaeologists, who used it to describe the stratigraphy of sediments and buried landscapes (Renfrew & Bahn, 1991, p. 28). In this case, layers can be taken literally as sediments from different periods lying on top of each other. By dating the layers, the archaeologist can reconstruct a time sequence. In many other cases, however, layers are a metaphor to describe the complexity of a landscape. By distinguishing layers, the researcher brings structure in the complex (historic) landscape. The usual way to operationalize this idea of historical layers consists of the mapping of landscape relics from different periods (Fig. 3.1; see for example Stabbetorp *et al.*, 2007). This, however, is a rather simplified vision. In this chapter I will try to show some of the complexities of the idea of historic layers, partly based on work by Kolen and others on the biography of landscape (Hidding *et al.*, 2001). I will do that first of all by exploring the city of Rome. In the second part of this chapter, I will try to apply these different types of layers on the rural landscape. In the last section, I will say a few words about the use of these concepts in landscape planning and management.

## Rome

The city of Rome represents a perfect example for showing different aspects of historical layers. As a starting point, the ‘eternal city’ offers a large concentration of visible objects from many periods. Figure 17.1 shows

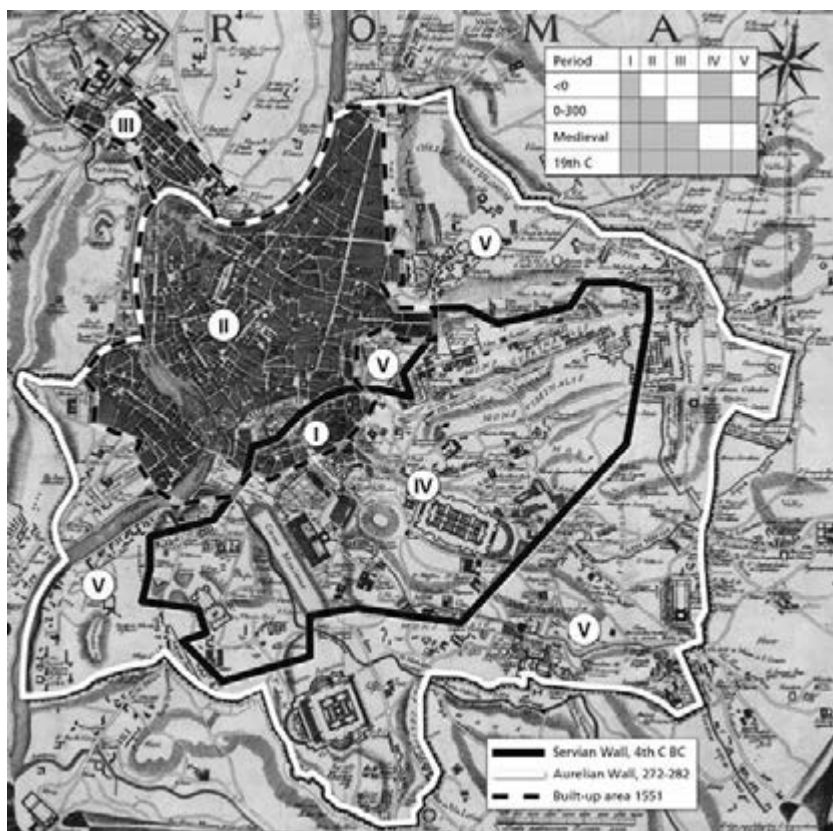
**Figure 17.1** The Forum of Augustus, with the pillars that remain from the Temple of Mars Ultor, founded by Augustus



During the 9th century the site was occupied by a monastery and the temple became the church of St Basilio. The monks were succeeded by Knights Hospitallers (12th century) and in 1568 by Dominican nuns. Their church of Santa Maria Annunziata, that still contained parts of the old temple, was demolished in 1926 ([http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa\\_Maria\\_Annunziata\\_ai\\_Monti](http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa_Maria_Annunziata_ai_Monti); 21-3-2012). The Forum was excavated as a preparation for the festivities of the 2000th anniversary of Augustus' birth in 1937 (the line shows the ground level as depicted by Giovanni Antonio Dosio in 1569; see Karmon, 2011, p. 30). On top of the old ruins, later buildings can be seen.



Figure 17.2 Settlement continuity in Rome



The basis of this figure is Leonardo Bufalino's map of Rome (1551), redrawn by Nolli in 1748 as a complement to his new map of Rome (Bogen & Thürlemann, 2009, p. 137). The historic data are based on Scarre, 1995. Basis: [http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/30726/Rome\\_Urbis\\_Ichnographiam\\_A\\_Leonardo\\_Bufalino\\_Ligneis\\_formis/Bufalino-Nolli.html](http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/30726/Rome_Urbis_Ichnographiam_A_Leonardo_Bufalino_Ligneis_formis/Bufalino-Nolli.html) [21-10-2013]

how the town is built through time, with every period building upon the remains from earlier periods. The result is a number of vertical layers. The deeper one digs, the older the remains that can be found. In parts of Rome, particularly around the Forum, remains from the Classical periods have been made visible by excavation, partly during the Renaissance (Karmon, 2011), partly in the early years of the 19th century (Moatti, 1993, pp. 90-91) or later. Here, present-day tourists walk on the Classical street level, many metres below the medieval level.

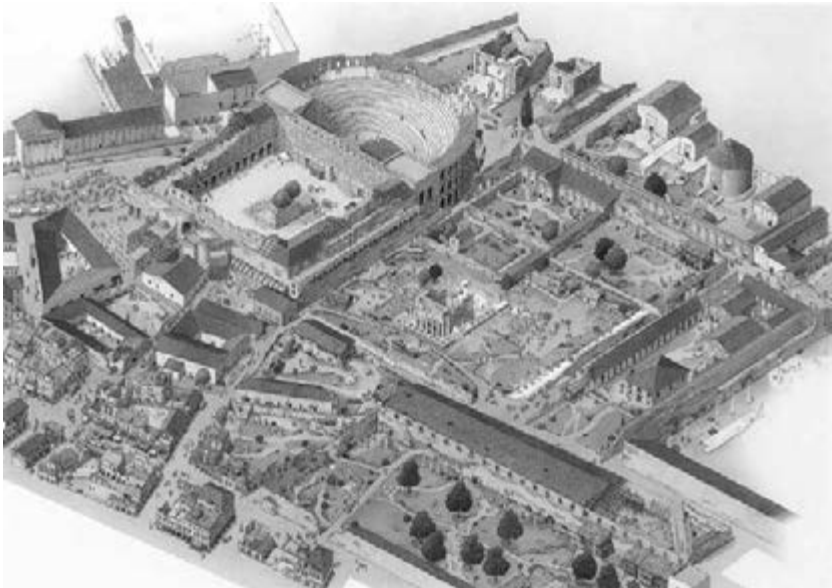
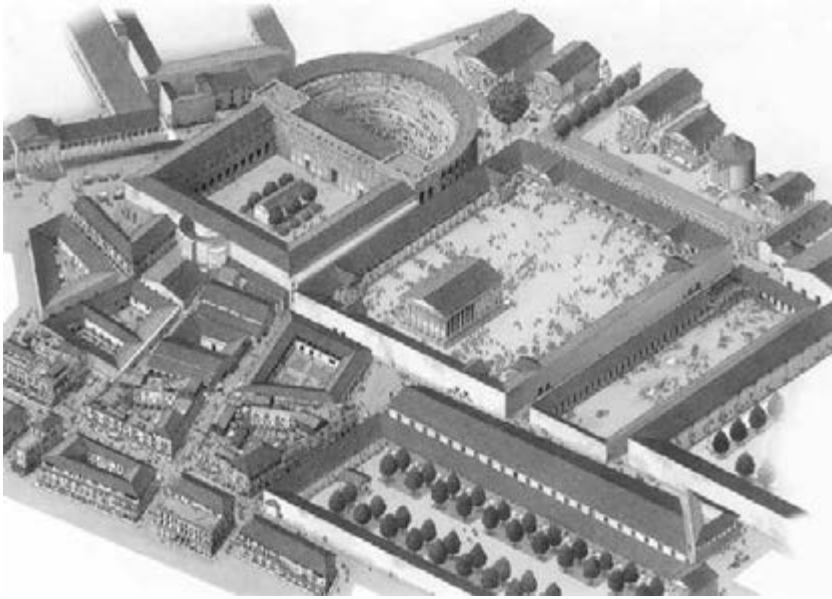
But one stumbles not only on different time periods when one digs holes in the town. It is also on a stroll through the town that one meets objects from almost every phase in the town's history (see for example Hotzan, 1994, p. 168).

In this respect, one could speak of horizontal layers that originated when the town grew and shrank. The relics from different phases are not spread evenly over the town. Figure 17.2 compares different periods in Roman history, on the basis of the 1551 map by Leonardo Bufalino. Shown are the oldest town (within the so-called Servian walls from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC), Imperial Rome (within the Aurelian Wall, 270-282) and the medieval and early modern town (Scarre, 1995; Insolera, 1980; Djament-Tran, 2011). By overlaying these structures, we can sketch five main historical-geographical stories.

- I Only a narrow zone of the hills, on which the oldest parts of the town were located, was part of the medieval and early modern urban area. This part of the town has been continuously inhabited since prehistory.
- II During the heyday of the Roman Empire, the town had extended in all directions, but particularly onto the *Campus Martius*, the low-lying land near the river Tiber. During the Middle Ages most of the population of Rome lived in this area. This part of the town shows a continuous occupation for some two thousand years.
- III Only in the northwest did the medieval town extend outside of the Classical town. The reason is that here, on the grave of the apostle Peter, the central church of Roman Christianity stood, surrounded by a small town quarter that was extended during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- IV and V Finally, most of the hills were only very thinly populated during the medieval and early modern periods. These parts of the town showed the rural landscape with ruins that were so often pictured and described by early modern painters and travellers. The open spaces were filled up with new buildings during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, resulting in the landscape – so well known to tourists – of Classical ruins surrounded by recent architecture.

The diagram within the map shows how each of the town quarters shows traces from a different combination of periods, but it also shows that some parts of the town have been continuously inhabited for thousands of years. Here, the traces from different periods are difficult to distinguish. A typical example is shown in figure 17.3, based on archaeological research in the so-called *Crypta Balbi* town quarter. This series of four reconstructions shows how a small part of the Classical town is gradually being transformed into a medieval urban landscape. A continuous process of reuse and reinterpretation leaves some structures intact but changes most others. Old layers fade away, but often stay recognisable, as palimpsests (see figure 17.3).

Figure 17.3a-d The Crypta Balbi area during the Roman Empire, in the 5th-6th century AD, the 10th-11th and the 14th century AD





From: Manacorda, 2003

But there is more. Perhaps more than in any other European city, the local elites of Rome continuously referred to earlier periods, in particular to the period of the Roman Empire. One of the early publications on the biography of landscape speaks of 'intellectual layers' (Hidding *et al.*, 2001). The connections of the Roman Catholic church hierarchy with the ancient Roman Empire formed the foundation of the claims for Rome as the capital of Christendom. A number of Renaissance popes visualized their relation to the Classical emperors by designing straight roads that connected the main churches with some of the focal points of Classical Rome. One of these popes, Sixtus V, built a new straight road to connect the Colosseum with his own bishop's church of St John Lateran (Insolera, 1980). The Colosseum was originally built as a recreational facility for the local population, who could watch circus acts and the occasional killing of animals, criminals and Christians. This last part of its history gave it a religious meaning during later centuries. In fact, the building survived partly because of the references to martyrs. Memorial stones provide information on restorations by the popes Clemens X (1675), Benedict XIV (1750) and Pius IX (1852).

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the references to the classical Empire became part of the legitimation for the new state of Italy and for its leaders, including of course Benito Mussolini. The Fascist Mussolini government (1922-1943) acted in the tradition of the popes by claiming to be the real successor and inheritor of the Roman Empire. The fascist dictator followed the footsteps of pope Sixtus V by building (in fact following a 19<sup>th</sup>-century plan) the *Via dell'Impero* that led from the Colosseum to his own headquarters at the *Piazza Venezia* (Painter, 2005, 22; Bosworth, 2011); after the Second World War the road was renamed as *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, connecting with the ancient Roman Empire instead of Mussolini's planned new empire. Another example is Mussolini's new urban extension of Rome for the planned 1942 world exhibition, the *Esposizione Universale Roma* (EUR)-quarter (Notaro, 2000). The typical architecture and the abundant use of travertine referred to classical Rome. The icon for the EUR is the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiano*, also known as the *Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro* (fig. 17.4), that refers directly to the Colosseum. This is a highly symbolic landscape.

Lastly, objects that have survived the centuries, even when they remained physically unchanged, did change their meaning over time (see for example Boholm, 1997). As Schama (1995, pp. 6-7) states: 'Landscape [...] is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock'. The temple of Hadrian was transformed into apartment blocks, other temples



Figure 17.4 The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiano in the EUR quarter



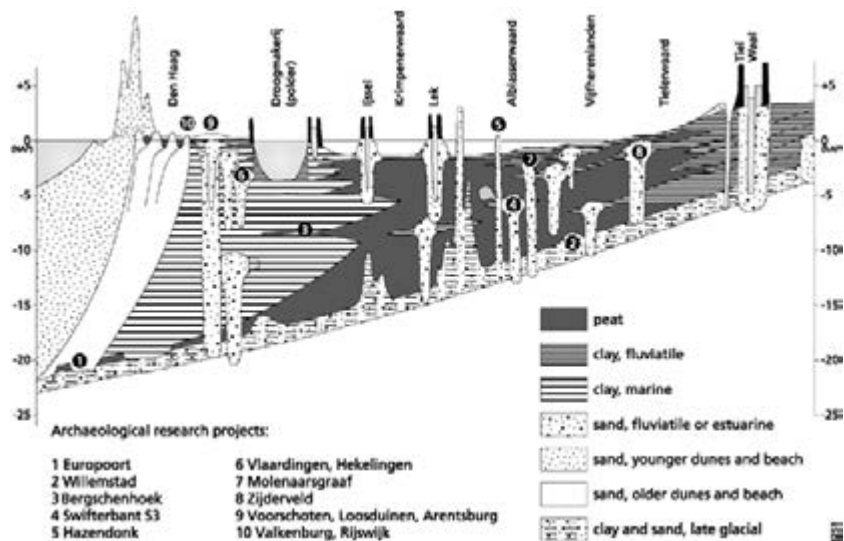
Photo: J. Renes

became medieval churches and the Mausoleum of Hadrianus became a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century fortress (later named *Castel Sant'Angelo*) and is now a museum. Apart from that, many of the buildings that seem to have survived without much modification have in fact more complex histories, as 19<sup>th</sup>-century enthusiasts often stripped them of medieval and post-medieval additions and reduced them to skeletons of 'original' material, thereby erasing fifteen centuries of history.

## The Dutch Rural Landscape

So, the temporality of urban landscape can be characterized in terms of different types of layers. The same is true for rural landscapes, as can be illustrated by the rural landscape of the Netherlands. Figure 17.5 shows a number of archaeological excavations, located within the complex physical layers of the Dutch coastal landscape. It is a typical example of physical layers or stratigraphy, as they are particularly important in archaeological research in the delta-region. The layers are the result of changing environments, of periods of sedimentation and erosion.

Figure 17.5 Vertical layers in the Dutch coastal landscape



After: Louwe Kooijmans, 1980

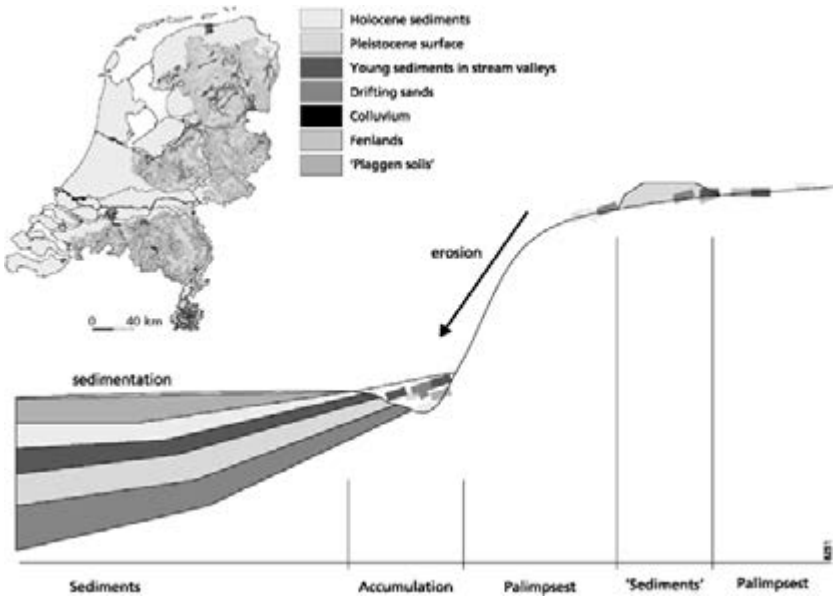


Many such layered landscapes are known. The layers can be the result of processes on a yearly basis, like tree-rings, but in many cases they are more irregular, like the ones shown here. These profiles show successive periods of maritime influence that brought sedimentation of silt, as well as quiet periods, in which peatlands could develop.

The same types of layers can result from cultural processes. In general, periods of growth and prosperity leave more traces in the landscape than periods of stagnation or decline. In periods of growth, investments are made into land reclamations and the building of new houses and factories. Most lakes in Holland were drained in the prosperous period of the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; after the drop in agrarian price levels around 1650, almost no new lakes were drained for two centuries. In periods of stagnation, older structures are reused (and thereby altered, meaning that these periods can also be recognized; see Ronnes, this volume).

When we look at the Netherlands, the idea of vertical layers is typical for the lower part of the country, in which the rural landscape shows a complex history of sedimentation and erosion. The cross-section in figure 17.6 shows three different groups of landscapes. Firstly, landscapes of sedimentation are gradually built up. The main example can be found in the landscapes of the

Figure 17.6 A cross-section through the Dutch landscape



After Beukers, 2009, p. 75

delta, where rivers and the sea periodically flood the land and leave layers of silt. Other examples of landscapes that were built up over time can be found in peat bogs and in man-made so-called plaggen layers that result from manure mixed with sods that are brought on the arable (Spek, 1992). Secondly, we see landscapes of accumulation. Erosion material ends up in valleys, where it may form layers again, but the archaeological material is mixed up. Thirdly, we find landscapes in which the surface changed only little during the centuries or even millennia. Here, every new phase in history reuses and transforms the older structures, in this way creating inextricable and dynamic palimpsests.

In this last group of landscapes, traces of many different periods are found intermixed. It is such landscapes that the English landscape historian W.G. Hoskins once described as ‘the richest historical record we possess’ (Hoskins, 1977, p. 14). Hoskins also used the metaphor – I already mentioned the term – of the landscape as a palimpsest, that was used earlier by the pioneer of landscape archaeology O.G.S. Crawford and that comes originally from the historian F.W. Maitland (1850-1906; Bowden, 2001; see also Daniels & Cosgrove, 1988, p. 8). The original use of the term ‘palimpsest’ comes from the medieval use of parchment that was expensive and therefore used again and again. Old messages were eradicated and new ones added, as on a modern blackboard, but traces of the old messages remained recognizable. Recently Daniels described the palimpsest, the overwritten manuscript, as ‘the presiding metaphor of deep landscape reading’ (Daniels, in Della Dora *et al.*, 2011, p. 268).

These concepts are certainly relevant for describing the landscape history of the Netherlands. However, they do not solve the bias in Dutch landscape history towards the description of objects and structures and explaining them in terms of anonymous processes. The role of individuals and groups of people is often neglected, as is the role of ideas, images and ideologies. In this respect the concepts of intellectual layers and of layers of meaning can add a broader scope to that research.

It is especially many designed landscapes that refer to earlier periods. Typical examples are many recent urban extensions, shaped as 18<sup>th</sup>-century small towns, pseudo-medieval castles and middle-class 1920s neighbourhoods (Renes, 2011). In all these cases, the new buildings are designed to deny what they really are: middle-class environments in a globalized world. Instead, they suggest the supposed cosiness and small-scale environments from the times of our ancestors. The most sophisticated examples even suggest the existence of non-linear history: the design for the cluster of second homes in 17<sup>th</sup>-century style known as Esonstad (the name refers to a mythical medieval lost town), developed in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in the northern fringe of the Netherlands, even included a canal that ‘has been abandoned and filled in’.

Figure 17.7 Lake Naarden (Dutch: Naardermeer) in 1900



The map still shows the pattern of drainage ditches that was developed for a project to drain the lake. Topographical map 368, scale 1:25.000

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A much older example is the Beemster, a World Heritage Site. The Beemster is a former lake that was drained between 1608 and 1612. With its size of 7000 hectares, it was a technical masterpiece. The new polder was rigorously planned, with a network of roads and ditches, with villages (of which originally 13 were planned, but only one realized), farms of different sizes and even roadside trees. It is not only protected as a 17<sup>th</sup>-century *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but also because of the layout itself. Roads and main ditches make patterns of exact squares, referring to Roman systems of land planning. This Renaissance layout can be connected to the investors, Amsterdam merchants that had become rich in a short period of time and that had now developed aspirations to become part of the cultural elite too.

Finally, the rural landscapes in the Netherlands have also changed their meanings. Many landscapes that are now valued for their ecological or

historic qualities were once the scenes of hard work by struggling people. Lakes that are now used for recreation were a threat to the land of our ancestors. Historic city centres that are now favoured living spaces for young urban professionals were deteriorated only one or two generations ago and were poor, dirty and noisy a century ago. Figure 17.7 shows the *Naardermeer* (Lake Naarden), a lake that was drained three times during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and was abandoned again every time for hydrological or military reasons. It received a reputation as a graveyard for investors. Around 1900 the town of Amsterdam proposed using it as a waste disposal area. At that moment, a group of conservationists started opposing the plans, arguing that the lake had important natural values. In 1905 they founded the Society for the Protection of Natural Monuments in the Netherlands (*Vereniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten in Nederland*), an organization that has now developed into one of the largest landowners in the country. In the following year, the *Naardermeer* became the first property of the new Society. Nowadays it is the archetypical nature reserve in the Netherlands.

These concepts of layers are all very relevant for landscape research. A presentation of layers on a map gives historical depth to our understanding of landscapes. Such maps are made, for example, within the English Historic Landscape Characterisation project (Rippon, 2004, colour plates D1 and D2). In these maps, each part of the landscape is shown with its main characteristic of land use and formative period. However, the example of Rome also makes clear that a map with the main formative periods misses most of the life histories of landscapes. The example of the Colosseum showed how inadequate it would be to put this building on the map only by virtue of its origin in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. For two thousand years it has been part of the Roman landscape and during that time it received ever new functions, meanings and stories.

At this point, I want to return to the concept of landscapes that are handed over from one generation to another and, during that process, receive new functions, are often physically transformed and change their meaning. By looking at landscapes in this way, the emphasis is no longer on the origins of landscapes and landscape features, but on their life histories.

## Landscape Layers in Planning

What is the relevance of all this for planning? In my opinion many projects would profit from the awareness of the complexities of the history of the landscape. In restoration of buildings or gardens, it has become almost a standard procedure to keep different time periods visible in the new layout

(see for example De Jong & Scheepmaker, 1996). However, in landscape planning, this is still rare. Admittedly, there exists a 'layer approach' that is popular in Dutch planning, but this distinguishes functional layers (a Braudel-like division into a slowly changing substratum, faster changing networks and even more dynamic occupation patterns) rather than historical layers (Van Schaick & Klaassen, 2011).

Often, however, the idea of historical layers and of complexity is missing altogether in planning. Recently, I was asked to reflect on a planning procedure for a polder that was planned to be, as it was called, given back to nature. This land was reclaimed from the tidal inlet of the river Scheldt in 1904 and was thought of by ecologists as well as by the official archaeological prospection maps as being without heritage values. One day of research made clear that this place had an extremely complex history, resulting in a number of vertical layers (Renes, 2009). Under the present polder, the traces of a short-lived 16<sup>th</sup>-century polder were hidden. Below that, the traces of a 10<sup>th</sup>-century fenland reclamation, drowned during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, were still close to the surface. Deeper down, Neolithic and Mesolithic people lived in a sandy region and their traces are well preserved by the later layers of fen and silt. So, what seems to be a young landscape is in fact a landscape with a complex structure of time layers in a vertical sequence. In the course of time this landscape not only changed in a physical sense, it also received new meanings. Around the most recent reclamation, in 1904, the meaning changed from a useless wetland with a history of struggle and abandonment, to a newly reclaimed land with agricultural and recreational values (the investors used the new polder for hunting). Nowadays ecologists describe the area as an agricultural wasteland that has to make way for an abundant bird life, whereas many others speak of some of the best agricultural land in the country and describe the polder as beautiful.

In other projects, more historical insights are present. In the Netherlands, during the last decade the use of heritage in planning has become very popular. In new town quarters, the integration of historical buildings, landscape structures and references to archaeological finds are used to invest the rather placeless new towns with stories to tell and sites to visit (Renes, 2011). However, in the use of heritage, often one historical period is selected. Although this is understandable from the point of view of a planner, who is often interested in transparency and clarity instead of complexity, this leads to a much simplified historical narrative.

An example is a place called Ypenburg, a new town quarter of The Hague that was built on the site of a former airfield. The airfield is part of the

collective memory as a place where heavy fighting took place on 10 May 1940 against the German attack on the seat of government and the royal family. The fighting offered time for the royal family and parts of the government to flee the country. In the new town, parts of the airfield building have been preserved and the main axis of the area refers to the old runway. Still, of the long history of this place (see for example Jongste & Houkes, 2008), only one time period has been used.

More sophisticated is the Leidsche Rijn new building estate in my hometown of Utrecht. Here, archaeologists focused heavily on the Roman period. However, the medieval landscape was not completely forgotten, and recently the early medieval course of the river Rhine has been reconstructed under the advertising name of Viking Rhine. This is all the work of experts. The local population had another idea of heritage. They still remembered the period when this landscape was dominated by horticulture. It was that history they wanted to visualize in the new town quarter. In the end a number of glasshouses and chimneys that had belonged to glasshouses were integrated in the plan. So, at least three different time periods are still recognizable in the area. In fact, a fourth time period is represented by one of the neighbourhoods in the new town, where houses are being built in the style from the 1920s: granny's age.

## Conclusion

So, to conclude, in this chapter we distinguished five types of historical layers.

1. The best-known, archaeological and geological, theme of vertical layers of traces from different periods lying on top of each other.
2. The geographical concept of horizontal layers, referring to spatial developments.
3. The palimpsest, as a result of continuous change on the same surface level.
4. Intellectual layers, when later generations revive and reinterpret older periods, for example in neo-styles, but also more creative references as in some works of art.
5. And finally, layers of meaning, when objects that may change only slightly in physical terms nevertheless receive ever new meanings, such as a dolmen that started as a burial chamber, later became a landmark, a stone quarry, a proof of the age of the landscape and is now an iconic heritage object.

Now, in conclusion, the use of heritage in landscape planning is one thing. But to do justice to the complexity of historic landscapes is something different. It is a challenge to find compromises between planners, who aim at making the landscape more transparent and who therefore simplify, and researchers, who tend to make things ever more complex. The concept of historical layers, as I tried to explain and problematize in this chapter, may be a tool in bringing structure into complex landscapes.

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#### Websites

The interactive Nolli website: <http://nolli.uoregon.edu/default.asp> [20-8-2010]



# 18 Biographies of Landscape: Rebala Heritage Reserve, Estonia

Locals' Perceptions of Landscape Heritage

*Helen Sooväli-Sepping*

## **Abstract**

It is valuable to study landscapes and local oral histories together as these histories contain spatial and cultural relations that are intertwined with each other. Local personal histories balance the official, dominant history, which has been created by memory institutions. This chapter uses personal histories as a tool for studying the values and the possible discrepancies of values with the focus on heritage. The in-depth interviews reveal that the well-meant vision that the heritage board is promoting, namely claiming that heritage protection is the future investment for the next generations, is often unrecognised among the villagers, because the idea of rurality for them is lost. This brings along resistance and, worse, irritation towards heritage protection, seeing it as conserving backwardness. The study leads to more general conclusions that the local community's knowledge about their environment has to be studied since landscape biographies offer input in the planning exercise.

**Keywords:** landscape biography, heritage, local community, oral history, Estonia

## **Theoretical Starting Points**

Heritage protection in Estonia is slowly following the steps of a European paradigmatic shift from focusing solely on the conservation and protection of localised, material objects towards conservation and protection of the environment in its widest sense of the word. Moreover, public debates about what is heritage and who is in charge of heritage management have emerged among different social groups. These discussions accord with the theoretical considerations about the role of heritage in society. Heritage experts Jan Kolen and Mathijs Witte (2006), among others, argue that cultural heritage is not only related to buildings and sites, but also to landscapes and urban

environments and the immaterial world of memories, historical narratives and traditions. In other words, we are actually engaging with a set of values and meanings, including such elements as emotion, memory and cultural knowledge and experiences. It is value and meaning that are the core subjects of heritage preservation and management process (Smith, 2006, see also Vösu & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012). To follow that idea, we find duality in the concept of heritage: firstly, it refers to a sense of belonging, i.e. a form of heritage that is inextricably linked to an area; secondly, it involves a sense of time, based on the history and geography of time. Cultural geographer David Atkinson (2005) points out the selectivity of heritage – the powerful have the advantage. A dominant group within a particular society often defines heritage, which usually is the national government (McDowell, 2008). Geographer Gregory John Ashworth (2008) takes the discussion further by arguing that the main reason for the intentional creation of heritage by public authorities is the creation and strengthening of group identity, as people are encouraged to identify with a social group, place or ideology. In line with that, Atkinson refers to an increasing number of studies that have addressed heritage sites as nodes where the competing histories – or dissonant heritages – of different social groups collide. It is, therefore, important to examine the nature of the misunderstandings, the production of protected landscapes, and the actual practices of participation.

The starting point for my study is the need to explore the meaning given to heritage from a local community's perspective. The emphasis for understanding the locals' perceptions of cultural heritage, of landscape heritage, lies in that they are the ones who are responsible for sustainably maintaining and protecting heritage. For that, we look at the community's understanding of landscape heritage through a landscape biography approach.

The project is theoretically informed with the landscape biography approach, suggested by the school of Dutch landscape study scholars, to bridge academic knowledge and the practical need to deal with landscape issues in everyday planning exercises (Bloemers, 2010). Landscape not only preserves priceless scientific evidence, it also has didactic value forming the tangible interface between present and past, and anchoring individual and communal memories (Kobyliński, 2006). Academic discourse perceives landscape as living history, connecting the present to the past, for those who can see and read it (Van der Knaap & Van der Valk, 2006). Kolen and Witte (2006) argue that the landscape biography approach is more than a metaphor: it is a way of saying that landscapes integrate a wide range of human (cultural) and ecological (natural) factors, but those important human factors have often been overlooked in geographical, historical and

**Figure 18.1** Communal meeting discussing the village future in the study area, the village of Parasmäe



Author: Helen Sooväli Sepping

archaeological research. I would suggest another layer to mapping the historical monuments and heritage sites in the area, recommended by the researchers encouraging the biographical approach (Van der Knaap & Van der Valk, 2006). The key to studying and thereby understanding landscape biographies is the perception of people living in the area of the landscape they dwell in *sensu* anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007). Historical geographers Hans Elerie and Theo Spek (2010) posit that local knowledge consists of a mix of historical facts, historical narratives (anecdotes, legends, folk tales), images, and meanings associated with certain individuals or groups (see figure 18.1).

This is also reflected in the landscape biography which reveals both the continuous biographical timeline of the scientists, and the more place-oriented, unique individual narratives and meanings of residents and other local experts. One way of approaching the landscape from an ethnographic perspective is by examining oral histories and knowledge of the people. The overriding interest within oral history has been to give a voice to those that have been hidden from history (Riley & Harvey, 2007). Andrews *et al.* (2006, p. 170) advocate the potential of oral histories for specifically geographical inquiry, suggesting that they demonstrate unique insights into the history of

places. These narratives provide recollection about self, about relationships with others and a place, insights rarely provided by other methods. On one level, oral histories act to provide an alternative strand of knowledge; that of the place and practice-specific insider, that can be utilised to inform conservation practice at a local scale (Riley & Harvey, 2007).

My story takes us to the small village of Parasmäe that is situated in the Rebala Heritage Reserve, Estonia. This village is representative for the heritage area in historical and economic development. The study explains the role of landscape biography in the life stories of the local community, more specifically how the officially claimed landscape heritage in their village is perceived by the villagers as part of life histories, and traces reasons for that. In other words, we study the relationship between biography and space and how specific subjects are used as a means of explaining sets of social, cultural and spatial relationships (Arnold & Sofaer, 2008). Further, we open a discussion on how the community's connection to heritage relates to heritage protection and thereby landscape planning and management. This question is valid for the Estonian context as until today there are few studies (Kõivupuu *et al.*, 2010; Rattus, 2007; Sooväli *et al.*, 2008) available on the perceptions of heritage.

## Methodological Considerations

This study is part of a wider project on place, meaning-making and personal identity, an ongoing micro-scale study on how people in the countryside perceive their relation to the personal histories of their farmhouse, land and environment (for more see Grubbström & Sooväli-Sepping, 2012). The study is based on two sources: the primary sources include 21 in-depth interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009 among the dwellers of the farms in Parasmäe village. Each interview lasted one to two hours; they were then transcribed and the arguments were thematically grouped. The interviews followed the open-ended questionnaires that were compiled for the study. The interviewees all live or have lived in the village. My intention was to gather a biography of every farm in the village. The secondary sources embody participation and observation of the process of the theme plan for the Rebala Heritage Reserve between the years 2005-2009. The theme plan was created to manage the planning process in the area. It arranges restrictions in land use and construction to follow the heritage statute and heritage preservation act.



In studying the village of Parasmäe, I sit in four chairs. Firstly, I am a researcher who carries out a study in the village. Secondly, as an expert I was conducting the preparatory work for the heritage reserve theme plan in 2005-2006. Thirdly, I have the insight of an official as I belong to the commission who works out the further development of the heritage area. Finally, I regard myself as an insider, since during the course of my long-term study I married one of the informants. Our family owns a c. 100-year old farmhouse complex in the heritage area, Parasmäe village, where we live during the summers. I am currently finishing a local history book about the village.

### **Nationalization of the Past: Biography of the Rebala Landscape**

To open a wider context of the community's relation to landscape biography and landscape heritage, a life story of the landscapes is needed. For that, we need to contextualise the area within the broader historical, political and socio-economical picture (figure 18.2).

**Figure 18.2** Aerial photo of Parasmäe village from 1930s



This photo has been followed as an example of pre-IIWW landscape structure in planning exercise.  
Author unknown

The village of Parasmäe is located in the Rebala Heritage Reserve, which is situated 27 kilometres east of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. The Heritage Reserve was established in 1987 to protect the area from phosphate-mining that would have destroyed the villages in the area. In the late 1980s, the plans for the destruction of locally highly appreciated and scientifically unstudied old field systems, archaeological sites and villages were strongly opposed by the environmental and political elite. This opposition turned gradually into a political movement that contributed to the regaining of independence of Estonia in 1991, thus giving the landscape a highly symbolic value on a national level. Somewhat later the scientific inventories indicated that this area is full of archaeological and historical sites and that the open landscape is of high importance.

As of today, within 25 square kilometres some 3000 archaeological remains have been found, making the area one of the densest archaeological sites in Estonia. The Rebala area is rich in graves, cult stones and other archaeological monuments. Archaeologists have discovered field systems that are among the oldest ones in the country dating back some 3000 years. Besides the value and importance of archaeological sites, the continuity of agricultural history gives significance to the area. The importance of agriculture is stressed in the heritage reserve statute that states, 'The purpose of the heritage area is to maintain and protect the uniqueness of the North Estonian agricultural landscape with its elements (villages, farms, land plots, arable land and their historical borders, archaeological, technical, art and natural monuments) that have high scientific and cultural value'. The idea of the reserve is to preserve the present environment as genuinely as possible, to protect the numerous historical remains from tampering and destruction, but also to provide information for visitors (<http://www.joelahtme.ee>).

The settlement pattern of the region is more or less 2000 years old and can largely be traced even today. Some of the villages are noted in *Liber Censur Danicae*, the Danish village register dating from 1241, and as these villages have maintained their pattern since cartographic evidence from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it makes the region not only unique in the regional and national context, but also internationally significant. The traditional building materials such as limestone, a characteristic stone for the region, are still used in constructing houses and buildings. During the years of Estonian independence before World War II, the Rebala area was a vital agricultural region due to its location close to Tallinn. After the war the collectivization in the 1950s triggered a significant decline of the population in this region. Young people escaped to Tallinn, since working on the collective farm was

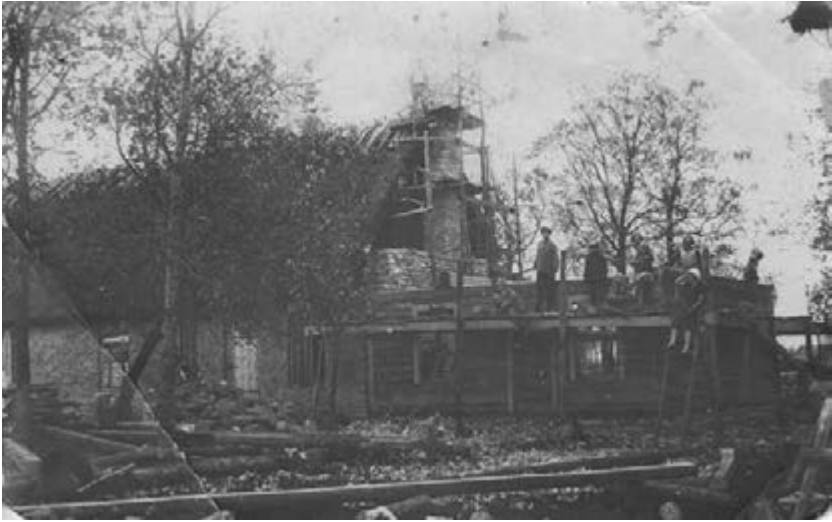
**Figure 18.3** The making of heritage. Improving living conditions in the 1930s

Photo: author unknown

perceived as a dead end – the idea of doing agricultural work for the state and not for one’s own benefit was unacceptable (figure 18.3).

Moreover, there were not enough jobs available in the countryside in the first years of collective farming, and the farmers did not receive any salary. In the early 1990s, after Estonia’s regaining of independence, the system of collective state farming was reformed and numerous farm owners in the Rebala area took up small-scale farming. This type of farming was in a few years time regarded as unprofitable as there was no market for the goods. The rapid changes in society – especially the economic success that lasted until 2009 – skyrocketed people’s expectations in the countryside and abstract hope for a higher standard of living. This meant a change of values and understandings of the village, their own farmhouses and the environment around them. Suddenly there was too much land; small-scale agriculture was not profitable. Today most of the agricultural land of the former family farms is leased to the big farms. This activity is supported by EU agricultural measures and is practised primarily to keep the land open and managed. This situation is rather common in Eastern European countries. Human geographers Hannes Palang *et al.* (2011) argue that peri-urban areas have a rural history of land use that is largely influenced by agricultural politics. The urbanisation of the countryside, with land use demand for recreational activities, for new lifestyles as well as for urban

infrastructure, implies new driving forces, new demands and new perspectives on the land.

The agricultural decline in the 1990s in the areas adjacent to the open quarry led to the loss of openness of the landscape and thereby invisibility of the monuments, but to some extent also abandonment of the traditional settlement pattern, which is being replaced to a degree by urban sprawl. The location of the heritage area close to Tallinn gives opportunities but at the same time presents challenges to the area. Heavy restrictions on land use today in the heritage protection area have preserved the agricultural settlement pattern and hindered large-scale real estate development.

Parasmäe village has faced a significant decline in inhabitants during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as in other villages in the heritage reserve. Before World War II the number of inhabitants was close to 200; today it is close to 30. At the time of conducting fieldwork the average age of the inhabitants was 60. One woman works in the nearby former kolkhoz centre; the rest either work in Tallinn or are retired. Two farms are used as summer houses.

Historically, based on the archaeological evidence, the area can be considered one of the cradles of human settlement in Estonia. Together with the archaeological sites, the area's well-preserved village settlement patterns and fine examples of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century farm architecture make the landscape unique. Moreover, the Rebala area has a role in the national re-independence movement. Nevertheless, how is the uniqueness that is inscribed in the landscape perceived by the local community? The next section gives a voice to the villagers to convey their ideas on heritage and its role in the village development.

### **Protection: For Whom and Why?**

In the interviews, the interviewees were asked a question about protecting their home environment as something valuable and distinctive. The villagers unenthusiastically expressed their attitudes towards heritage. The villagers explain in the following why there is an unwillingness to protect the cultural values of the area. For that, let me contextualise the current planning situation as background knowledge.

The real estate boom of the 2000s that took place in Estonia has left the heritage area nearly untouched, as the Heritage Board froze all detailed plans until the new theme plan was completed. The countryside close to

the capital city has been under great pressure, especially this heritage area under question. In turn, Tallinn has expanded rapidly over its borders in the last seven years. There were great expectations to sell farmland to real estate developers to gain rapid profit, as it was possible in the nearby municipalities. In an interview, one villager in the Parasmäe village told us that he had high hopes for developing small-scale real estate on his land and he expressed his disappointment when he received a negative answer to his development application from the local authorities. He told us: 'I wanted to build a couple of log houses here, but I was not allowed to do that. I am thinking of selling the farm. I have been too long in Parasmäe, the village is too ordinary' (male, 48).

Another village inhabitant found the heritage protection unworthy, stating that there are no construction materials available anymore that could be used: 'Heritage protection is pointless, there is nothing left to protect. There are no materials to renovate with' (male, 48).

Moreover, an interviewee belonging to the younger generation blames the negligence of the village on heritage protection. Protection restrictions, he says, are fatal for village development:

In reality, I am not allowed to renovate [...] There are some sort of restrictions. But I cannot live in a house today which is one hundred years old and has a earthen floor. I need comfort. [...] Everything is overgrown and vanishes because it is the Rebala Heritage Reserve. Okay, maybe people want to come with a sight-seeing tour but they don't see anything else but brushwood and it transfers into a completely meaningless place. [...] In our place we have maybe one farm that could be exposed or maintained, but if you want to see this sort of farmhouse you go to an open-air museum. [...] You don't have to travel to Parasmäe for that. Of course to maintain it you need a lot of money, many of the village people don't have that [...] This place has no perspective. Because of heritage protection.

Still, there are a few positive voices about the restriction mechanisms. An older respondent shared his satisfaction that the village has not changed: 'Luckily, there are no newcomers in the village. It is also good that new buildings have not been built. There is no need for that' (male, 75).

It follows, there is no common understanding among the village people whether the village should stay the size it is now or whether some real estate development should be allowed. Most of the farm owners have been thinking of selling their land to be developed. As of now, the Heritage Board

has forbidden most of the development activity – three new houses have been built recently little further from the village centre.

Intriguingly, most of the respondents could not indicate any of the existing restrictions. They have heard that the restrictions set limits to their property but they have not experienced this themselves. There are others who acknowledge that the buildings are old and are worth protecting, but feel that heritage harms the living quality of the whole village, as it is too expensive to fulfil the requirements from the Heritage Board. Two respondents had met the heritage consultant and shared their experiences: ‘We cannot build the way heritage protection tells us to. We cannot put reed-mats here, do you understand. Already moneywise /.../ heritage protection does not give any money’ (female, 69). This citation shows that inhabitants are irritated because they cannot rebuild or renovate the outdated houses and there are no compensation mechanisms, which they expect to have to maintain heritage.

### Whose Heritage?

Our discussions with the villagers on the peculiarity of landscape led us to the history of the village and the farms. The knowledge about the uniqueness of the village structure and barn dwellings as well as protected archaeological monuments is rather fragmented – older inhabitants have heard and can tell about the peculiarity of the landscape, but the overall understanding is that there is not much to see in the village. In other words, this place is regarded as unexceptional in any way. Several people explain that there is no heritage in the village that is left to be protected, as told by the former village head:

We don’t have any heritage sights [...] In the end this heritage protection [officials] understood that also because I called them here /.../ They sent their delegation from Tallinn[...] They didn’t know what heritage is and came to see what is here in our village. [...] There are no sights here. No sights! It is an ancient village place where people have worked, lived, born and died. And that’s it (male, 67).

A few respondents are aware of the archaeological sites in the village, although the stories and meanings of the monuments are generally not known: ‘We have a big cult stone. There are these [...] inside[...] Something was scrubbed, something was wished. Small cavities are inside. [...] In the

Soviet time, when heritage protection started its activity, then they came and marked all these [stones]'. When we asked whether they knew about the cult stone in the village before or did the heritage people tell them that, then the answer was, 'We were not aware of it before' (female, 74).

## Discussion

The idea of establishing the protection area in the late 1980s was warmly welcomed by the local inhabitants living in the area at that time, as it saved their homes and lands. This argumentation supports the account in heritage studies claiming that there is a correlation between social change, feelings of threat and a marked increase in historical awareness, need for identity and use of heritage (Van Londen, 2006). However, the validity of a particular opinion may also be situationally determined rather than static. The interpretations of heritage may vary depending on the situation of the observer in time and in space. Thus, it is the meaning that gives value to heritage, either cultural or financial, and explains why certain artefacts, traditions and memories have been selected from the near infinity of the past (Graham & Howard, 2008).

There are several points to be made on the examples of transformations in the context of heritage and rurality in Estonia. The empirical case study of oral histories shows that obviously, the lack of communication between different interest groups is behind the dissonance of heritage perception. Local dwellers feel that state commissioners see heritage management as a taken-for-granted responsibility on the local dwellers' shoulders that has to be followed because the law says so. I would argue that over the years, this sort of top-down heritage management has led to mistrust and unwillingness from the wider public to accept and value heritage. The perceptions of heritage and heritage management are not understood with one accord. The stories told by the people indicate that they are evidently proud of living in an old village in their family farms, are well aware of their forefathers' lives and deeds in the village. At the same time, generally, most of the village dwellers do not perceive the village, the farms and village pattern as something that has any special heritage value or has to be protected.

On the contrary, it is hard for them to conserve the buildings and maintain the fields for aesthetic purposes, as some of the interviewees tell us. Through centuries, their forefathers have worked hard to expand the farms, to see the progress in farming techniques and improve their living standards by building new farmhouses. Therefore, it is naïve to expect that



local inhabitants who live in the area that is under cultural heritage protection will understand what is so valuable and why they have to suffer from restrictions. It follows that landscape and landscape values proposed by the heritage specialists, academics and planners do not appeal to the people – it is not their heritage. The discussion on heritage and heritage protection in a way is far from reality: it is a knowledge transfer on the expert level. A top-down approach eliminates the understandings of lay people towards heritage. Another reason for a modest appreciation of heritage could be explained by the taken-for-grantedness of the surrounding environment.

At the same time, there are examples in a number of remote corners of South Estonia where communities are highly aware of the values that characterise their region. They see the landmarks, landscapes, traditions and customary way of living as an opportunity to promote the area for tourists and invite regional investments. These communities serve as heritage guards who live without any heritage restrictions. This argument may indicate that geographical distance from a larger urban centre increases the appreciation towards landscape values and that people are interested in managing and promoting heritage themselves. In this context we could argue that the peri-urban Rebala Heritage reserve area is geographically perceived as more peripheral compared to the distant parts of Estonia for the reason that it is close to the metropolitan area and it has not the functions of a rural area.

Secondly, the stories of village people tell us of ambiguity. The references to the positive aspects in the village are made generally in connection to the past. The present is described in relatively gloomy colours and the future is not discussed at all. There are those farm owners who would like to tear down the old buildings, develop the area into a small real estate village or even sell the lands and farmhouse. The persistence of the place, with family roots, seems to be lost. Dramatic changes in the countryside such as collectivization, urbanization and loss of private property are the main reasons the connection to the forefathers' work and communal village identity is lost. We may assume that, if instead of inheriting the farms, the owners had bought the farms themselves, then the owners' attitudes towards the farm buildings and the land would be entirely different. Most of the current farm owners have moved back to the countryside from the towns to take over the family farm. There are farmers who have some knowledge about their farms and environment; there are others who just live in their houses. For them, the farmhouse seems not to have the same prestige as one hundred years ago. Therefore, inheriting a farm could be conciliation with fate rather than an event to be waited for and celebrated.

Future perspectives of the farms are unwillingly discussed, as in most of the cases it remains unclear which family member wishes to inherit the farm. The farm dwellers feel no motivation to invest their energy and enthusiasm in renovating the farmhouse because of the uncertainty ahead of them.

Heritage protection with its rules and restrictions embodies a larger idea to promote the values and attitudes of the forefathers, both regionally and nationally, to bring them forward and give them meaning in the current socio-cultural context in Estonia. Under these circumstances, for many farm dwellers, promoting a sustainable, 'eco' (ecological) lifestyle is currently financially out of reach. Furthermore, measures for materialising heritage management on the local, individual level are at present unreasoned. This well-meant but obscured agenda of heritage protection being the future investment for the next generations is often unrecognised among the villagers, because the idea of rurality for them is lost. This brings along resistance and, worse, irritation towards heritage protection, seeing it as conserving backwardness. Further, it leads to the following conclusions: firstly, the local community's knowledge about their environment has to be studied since landscape biographies offer input in the planning exercise. That takes us to the second conclusion. The heritage planning visions have to be carefully discussed with the interest groups involved, because with the embedded dissonance planning does not achieve its goals. With these discussions we share the knowledge of landscape values with the community.

To conclude, studying closely biographies of landscape, the micro-scale stories of people dwelling in the landscape, and stories and thoughts that are important to them, helps to understand what could be improved in landscape management.

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