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Pillepallescapes – Journeys to the edges of socially shared landscape constructions

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In this paper, the construction of landscape is contoured by its negation of non-landscape, making visible a space of meaning that we call pillepallescapes. Pillepallescapes is understood, among other things, as a secondary meaning that can often lead to disputes about its relevance, thus revealing ambiguous polyvalences in the quest to unify the world. We introduce pillepall to the context of landscape studies for elements which, from certain perspectives, appear to be insignificant to these landscape constructions. However, it is at these borderlines of meaningfulness – the pillepallescapes, the object of what oscillates between landscape and non-landscape – that conflicts over landscape interpretive sovereignty seem to spark. When framed neopragmatically, this contribution self-ironically opens up a relevant extension for landscape research, from which methodological-analytical, as well as cartographic innovation potentials, can be derived.

Key Words: *pillepallescapes, neopragmatism, borders, landscape communication, polyvalence, self-deprecating landscape research.*

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Introduction

In colloquial German, the noun 'Pillepalle' refers to a small matter, a triviality or unimportance, which, nonetheless, often provides a reason to get upset about or get into a dispute. Its trifle nature, triviality or unimportance for a certain person or persons is not so small as it is for another (Forberg, 2020). The word, which can only be inadequately translated into English as 'easy-peasy', refers to a double difference: that between the object designated as 'pillepalle' and the designating subject, as well as the intersubjectively not uniformly conceived evaluation of the object itself. Thus, with 'pillepalle', there is always the inherent possibility that one person considers something very seriously while another understands it as a trifle, nature triviality or unimportant after all. If a scratch in the glass of a smartphone is, at best worth a shrug to one person, another person interprets it as patina. For a third person, the scratch is something that can barely be endured, combined with the immediate urge to replace the smartwatch with a new, more up-to-date model as quickly as possible. While the first person can still take note of the second person's interpretation with amusement, the third person is left with incomprehension about how one can get so upset about such a pile of pellets. An attribution that the third person must reject indignantly: a scratch in the glass of a smartwatch is a serious problem and by no means just a pellet.

Not only is pillepalle characterised by widely varying attributions, interpretations, and valuations, but so is landscape. The concept of landscape has a 'large semantic court', in general, not only in German (Hard, 1969), which has developed over a conceptual history (in German) of more than a millennium, and includes symbolic as well as aesthetic interpretations, moral norms and ecological conceptions, political unification, etc. do this in different languages in different forms (Schenk, 2001, 2017; Cresswell, 2003; Wardenga, 2006; Wylie, 2007; Antrop, 2019; Berr & Schenk, 2019; Berr & Kühne, 2020; D'Angelo, 2021).

Given the multiplicity of meanings of 'landscape', we will first turn to an analytical differentiation of the complex concept of landscape to operationalise it for the connection with the term 'pillepalle'. However, before we address the gap in understanding 'landscape' that we intend to address through the use of the term 'pillepalle', we will return to the origin and meaning of the word 'pillepalle'. In turn, the central part of our work will be formed by the exposition of our concept of 'pillepallescapes'. Finally, we will place this concept in the current state of landscape research and give an outlook on its potential for dealing with the topic 'landscape'.

Theoretical classification

'Landscape' can be conceptualised in very different ways. Intending to integrate the different understandings of the word and to be able to assign them to different levels (social, individual and material), we resort to a neopragmatism approach (Rorty 1982, 1997, 1998) and, on the other hand to the approach of the Three

Landscapes derived from the Three Worlds Theory by Karl Popper (1979) or Popper and Eccles (2008[1977]). Since the specifics (and the meaningfulness) of the neopragmatic approach can be better justified based on the approach of the Three Landscapes, we devote ourselves as a starting point briefly to Popper's Three Worlds Theory, which precedes this understanding of landscape, which is explained in more detail, for example, in Koegst (2022), Kühne (2018a, 2020, 2021), Kühne & Berr (2021), Kühne & Jenal (2020) Kühne & Koegst (2022).

Karl Popper understands World 1 as the material world. World 2 is the world of individual consciousness. World 3 is, for him, the world of cultural content. Certain objects can be assigned to two worlds: Thus, a book is, on the one hand, a material object (world 1) and on the other hand, it contains socially shared knowledge (world 3). Man is part of all three worlds; as a physical being, he is part of world 1, and his consciousness comprises his world 2, in which socially shared knowledge (world 3) is actualised.

From the three worlds, in turn, three spaces can be derived. Space 3 comprises the social conceptions of space, and space 2 the individual conceptions of space. Space is formed by the spatial arrangement of objects (in the sense of a relational concept of space). In contrast to space, whose constitutive level is found in space 1, this is assigned to level 3 in the case of landscape, i.e. landscape 3. Landscape 3 comprises the socially shared patterns of interpretation, evaluation and categorisation of the landscape. These are conveyed to the individual in the socialisation process and by comparing them with individual experiences of what is experienced as landscape on level 1 as landscape 1. Landscape 2 thus emerges. Landscape 2 thereby generally confirms the landscape 3 conceptions but can also have an innovative effect in relation to landscape 3 (since 'landscape' can also be used metaphorically, for example, in the sense of 'educational landscape', landscape 3 is not simply a subset of space 3, but also partially extends beyond it (Figure 1).
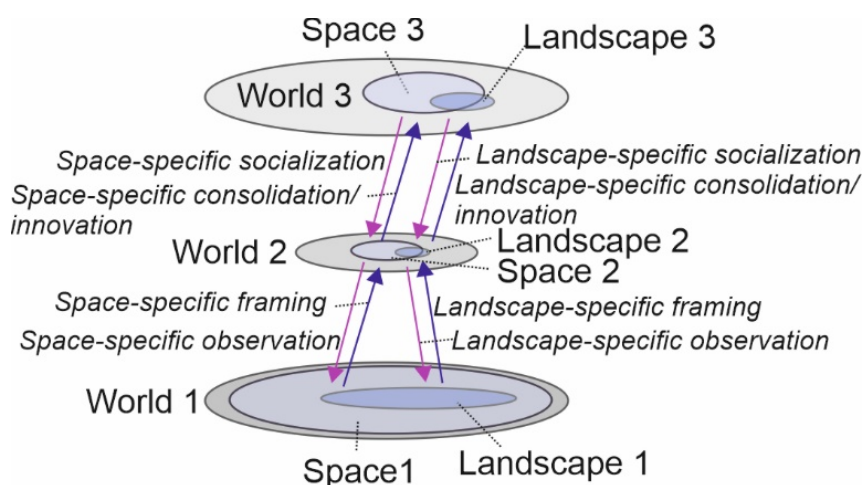
Figure 1. Distribution of village typology based on VDI Figure 1 The three levels of world, space and landscape. Apart from landscapes 2 and 3, the illustration includes the metaphorical contents
Source: Kühne, 2020

The possibility to innovate on landscape 3 is not equally distributed socially but depends on the availability of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) because landscape construction occurs in different modes. The a-mode denotes the individual turning to a 'native normal landscape'. This is experienced through the mediation of significant others (such as parents and relatives), especially during childhood, in the multisensory reference to space 1. The landscape 1a generated in this way is linked to the norm of material stability. Mode b, in turn, comprises as a common-sense landscape the socially generally shared patterns of interpretation, categorisation, and evaluation, especially from an aesthetic but increasingly also from an ecological perspective.

The common-sense goes back to school curricular content and features films and documentaries, non-fiction books, Internet videos, newspaper articles, video games, etc. The norm directed from b-mode to landscape 1 is that of the correspondence of stereotypical aesthetic and ecological ideas. Mode c, on the other hand, comprises special expert knowledge, which is primarily conveyed by landscape-related courses of study (landscape architecture, geography, biology, forestry, etc.). The contents of c-modal landscape construction are accordingly very different and are sometimes in evident interpretative competition with each other (for example, agricultural economics and landscape planning). Common to c-modal landscape evaluations is the subject-specific deficit view, on the one hand, as well as the science-immanent urge to innovations. In this respect, new landscape interpretations, evaluations and categorisations often originate in the c-mode and diffuse from there into the b-mode (Fontaine, 2019, 2020; Kühne, 2008, 2018b, 2019a; Peng, 2020; Stotten, 2013, 2015).

The complexity of 'landscape' is evident in the following aspects (Papadimitriou, 2010, 2021):
1. 'Landscape' differentiates into the levels of the material, the individual, and the social
2. Levels are connected by landscapes 1 and 2 as well as by landscapes 2 and 3 (because the individual consciousness is the only connection of levels 1 and 3)
3. Landscape construction takes place inside the three modes: a, b and c
4. Mode c and increasingly also mode b are subject to increasing differentiation (Kühne & Koegst, 2022).
5. The a-mode is constitutively individually bound

Since the development of a landscape theory that integrates all facets of 'landscape' is still pending (and it is doubtful whether such a theory will ever be developed), very different theoretical approaches to the topic of 'landscape' are currently available. These focus selectively on different levels and relations between levels. Social constructivist approaches are mainly concerned with the relations between landscapes 2 and 3, phenomenological ones with those between landscapes 1 and 2, positivist landscape research are especially focused on landscape 1, and discourse-theoretical and radical constructivist approaches focus mainly on landscape 3. Critical framings, both in the tradition of Karl Marx and that of Pierre Bourdieu, are concerned with power relations between landscapes

1, 2 and 3 (Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Kühne, 2008, 2019a, 2019b; Aschenbrand, 2017). To date, the complexity of the topic of landscape exceeds the capacity for abstraction and integration into a single theory.

In order to nevertheless subject landscape to a more comprehensive theoretical framing, a metatheoretical integration thus remains. This, in turn, can be justified by neopragmatism considerations. The interest in investigating a complex issue (in this case, landscape) justifies the combination of different theories, some of which are in interpretational competition. However, it provides the basis for the triangulation of different methods, researcher perspectives, data, the integration of a-modal and b-modal perspectives, and, last but not least, representations of results. The yardstick for this is not only a complex subject with questions that cannot be addressed by a single theoretical framing but also the generation of a suitable interpretation of 'landscape'.

Concerning this article, this means that it is necessary to show that the concept of 'pillepalle' expands in a way that is suitable for future research in relation to landscape. But before we address the question at which point the current understanding of landscape represented here requires differentiation, we will return to the origin of the word 'pillepalle' and its conceptual version.

Pillepalle – etymological classifications and the specification of one's understanding

As presented in the introduction, 'pillepalle' can be described as something that the speaker assumes to be void, unimportant, incidental, or a trifle, whereas, on the other hand, another person or persons may well attach greater importance to that thing. More abstractly, 'pillepalle' illustrates the contingency of world interpretations. It resists the effort to unify the world (Bauman, 1992; Kühne, 2016; Bauer, 2018).

The word origin of 'pillepalle', meanwhile, is not clear. There are four alternative explanations (Ruhrgebietssprache, 2013; Löffler, 2014; Duden, 2018; Bedeutung Online, 2019; Forberg, 2020):

1. The word goes back to the regionally, especially widespread in the Rhineland, old German expression 'pill', which denoted something small, such as the expression 'Lütt' today).
2. Another possible alternative origin is from the Hebrew word 'pilpul'. 'Pilpul' refers to the study of the Talmud. Here the logical structure of and the contents of the Talmud are interpreted and clarified in detail – and weighed against alternative interpretations. From this alternative interpretation, the connotation with exaggerated accuracy, but also the hair-splitting in the argument with the object, as well as the connotation with bossiness of 'pillepalle' can be inferred.
3. A third alternative refers to the derivation of the French expression 'pile-poil'. This means 'exact' and 'quite precise' and may have spread to Germany with the Napoleonic wars and then transformed into the

German pronunciation 'pillepalle'. Here, too, the aspect of claiming an (exaggerated) accuracy becomes clear – whose effect turns into the opposite: contingency is produced instead of an intersubjectively exact, unambiguous understanding.

4. The fourth alternative again goes back to French. The French word for 'thatched houses with piles' is 'maison de paille sur piles'. While these houses were easy to build, their permanence was also manageable. This word understanding of easily obtained, but not lasting, is particularly present in the regiolect of the Ruhr area.

In view of these remarks, we summarise our understanding of 'pillepalle' as follows: 'pillepalle' is a designation for something that is subject to polarised evaluation despite a certain edge of meaning, and thus can provoke an intensified discussion and at the same time does not present too many hurdles in terms of cognitive access (which in turn can also be discourse-dependent, meaning that a c-modal discussion of something designated as 'pillepalle' does not necessarily have to be accessible to people whose understanding of landscape is b-modal).

Landscape theory challenges as a basis for the construction of 'pillepallescapes'.

Like any other term, the concept of landscape includes some things and excludes some things. By this distinction (Brown, 1971), if 'landscape' would either include or exclude everything, it would be without a cognition-related value for the understanding of the world (whether 1, 2, or 3) (Körner, 2010, Eisel, 2008, Berr, 2020). In this respect, 'landscape' is constitutive of 'non-landscape'. The notion of non-landscape appeared from time to time in landscape research (Christensen et al., 2011; Pedroli, 2016). It has been used to denote something that commonly does not correspond to what is expected of a landscape, especially in the c-mode. Pedroli (2016) summarises non-landscapes – following Marc Augé's understanding of non-places (2006) – as spaces (1) that lack identity and thus cannot be landscapes (1). In this work, however, we understand the concept of non-landscape as a complementary set of landscape. Non-landscape is on levels 1, 2 and 3 that part of space (1, 2 or 3) which is not subject to a landscape synthesis. Since this word limits to landscape as a subset of space, we disregard metaphorical landscapes in our paper here and below.

If the ratio of landscape to non-landscape were stable, the understanding of landscape (2 or 3) would remain constant and thus – to draw on Berger & Luckmann (1966) – would remain in the realm of the unquestioningly normal, which would also offer little reason to deal with the topic of landscape scientifically, because our expected gain in knowledge would remain modest (Luhmann, 1990). As it became clear from the previous section, the contouring of landscape 2 is not constant (people gather experiences, cognitively deal with landscape, supplement the b-mode by the c-mode, and try to displace the a-mode by the c-mode) (Heiland, 1992; Kühne, 2006; Wojtkiewicz & Heiland, 2012). As was also clear from the previous section, landscape is constructed very differently

in the a-, b-, and c-modes. The construction of landscape in the a-mode is even constitutively individual.

In the c-mode it is constitutively bound to different professional discourses. The b-mode also shows culturally significant differences depending on various social milieus concerning the location of the place of residence with respect to the polarity from central-metropolitan to peripheral-rural (Bruns et al., 2015; Bruns & Münderlein, 2017; Drexler, 2013; Jenal, 2019; Kühne, 2018c; Makhzoumi, 2002, 2015). Landscapes 2 and 3 and the modes are not the only ones subject to differentiations and changes, the same applies to their physical foundations, space 1, into which landscape 1 is synthesised. Changing social demands on space and particularly on landscape, their inscriptions in space 1 – mediated by the individual – change as well (Blackbourn, 2007; Schenk, 2011; Schreg & Schenk, 2008). This is connected with whether and to what extent these changes are interpreted in terms of landscape or not, again differentiated into a-, b- and c-modes (Dix, 2002; Gipe, 2002; Kühne et al., 2022; Weber et al., 2018).

It thus becomes clear that not only the meaning of 'landscape' is contingent both temporally and socially, but also with regard to its material foundations. This leads us back to the beginning of this section: landscape contours itself to non-landscape, represented by a line. In light of our understanding of pillepalle outlined in the previous sections, we will deal with this delimitation in the following.

Landscape as a pillepalle

If we take the understanding of 'pillepalle' we have outlined as a designation for something that, despite a certain edge of meaning (A), is subject to polarised evaluation (B), with which intensified debate can be provoked (C), and which at the same time does not present too many hurdles in terms of cognitive access (D), the term can be applied in particular to the boundaries between landscape and non-landscape.

Let's start with the last point (D) of our understanding of pillepalle: at least in Western societies, 'landscape' is something that is commonly conceptually available in both a- and b-modes. The ability to communicate about 'landscape' – without loss of social recognition – is widespread. In this respect (in a- and b-mode), landscape-related communication is anchored in everyday life; the cognitive hurdles for this are not exceptionally high.

The immediate existential dependence of most people on space 1 has decreased in the course of social modernisation. Instead of wresting the harvest - which merely ensured one's survival - from the soil with simple tools as farmers, always threatened by storms, hail, late frosts, etc., space 1 as 'natural' or agricultural could be subjected to an aestheticised consideration. Since the Renaissance, landscape painting has offered a large number of synthesis patterns for this aestheticised synopsis (Burckhardt, 2006; Büttner, 2006, 2019; Ipsen, 2006; Ritter, 1996; Termeer, 2007). The existential dependence on space 1

became a distanced considered landscape 1. A process that is also increasingly effective in relation to ecological contents of the b-mode of landscape construction: the concern for a concrete piece of 'nature' increasingly became an abstract discourse about climate change, eco-social transformation, critique of capitalism, etc., which in its abstractness is also little connectable to the nature and landscape constructions of the different social functional systems (Kühne et al., 2021; Luhmann, 1986). In this respect, we can agree with point A of the underlying understanding of pillepalle; landscape is of marginal importance for the vast majority of people (we will discuss later that this is different in c-mode).

Last but not least, the intensity of disputes about changes to landscape 1 in the course of the energy transition, the construction of infrastructures, the extraction of raw materials, the designation of protected areas, etc., have shown how considerable the polarisation potential of landscape conflicts is (point B). Whereby the resistance against changes of landscape 1 is in the rarest of cases to be found in the existential dependence on space 1 interpreted as landscape (such as by farmers acting against the designation of protected areas). Instead, it is rooted in the a-mode of a general rejection of change or in distanced aesthetic consideration or generalised ecological evaluation. The resulting conflicts are conducted with an intensity that often leads not only to a habitualisation of the conflict in the local society but also contributes to a morality-based division of society (point C) (Kühne et al., 2021; Kühne & Weber 2016; Leibenath & Otto, 2014; Liebal & Weber 2013; Pasqualetti, 2001; Weber, 2018; Weber & Kühne, 2021).

Now that we have established that we can call landscape – according to the criteria we have elaborated – pillepalle for contemporary society, we will now address those parts of the understanding of landscape (at the three levels and the three modes) that we understand as pillepallescapes.

Pillpallescapes

We want to understand pillepallescapes as any area between landscape and non-landscape that – on the three levels as well as in the three modes – is neither clearly attributable to one or the other. These are, for example, objects of space 1 that are understood by a person in the a-mode as part of his or her landscape 1a (such as a wind turbine), while this object does not have any landscape qualities in the c-mode of a landscape maintainer. Pillepallescapes can be described as a synopsis (pillepallescape 2) of material elements (pillepallescape 1) that are selectively constructed by certain individuals as part of landscape 1, for which, however, no consensus has yet developed in a-, b-, or c- mode (Figure 2). Pillepallescapes are thus even more processual than landscapes because they oscillate between landscape and non-landscape. Pillepallescapes temporarily become landscapes or disappear into non-landscapes. If they are not considered individual cases but are generalised, they form a hybrid seam between landscapes and non-landscapes. If we stick to the understanding of landscape, pillepallescapes are the outposts in the contingency space (Figure 3). It is this

degree of contingency, in turn, which makes them so polarising and the subject of conflict, for contingency resists the urge to order and produce univocality. In pillepallescapes, the latent contingency problem of pillepalle is materialised and thus manifested in the form of landscape 1. Different perspectives, such as modes of landscape construction, become hardly ignorable here.
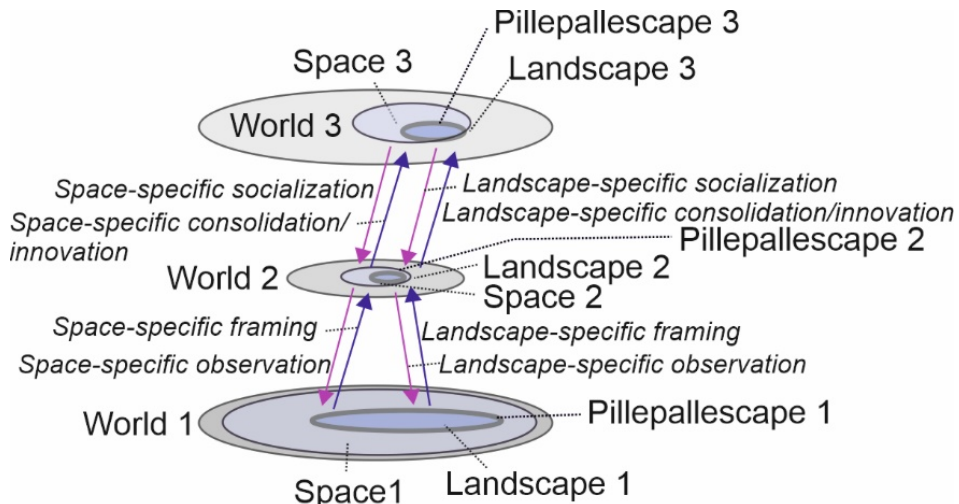
Figure 2. Pillepallescapes 1, 2, and 3 (only the spatial contents of landscape are shown, not the metaphorical ones)

As a result of the further differentiation of society, the world of science (c-mode) branches out into different meanings. In turn, the b-mode, the set of generally shared patterns of interpretation, categorisation, and evaluation, decreases; the bubbles of communication that reproduce themselves (quasi auto-poetically) and immunise themselves against alternative interpretations of the world increase (Nagle, 2017; Nassehi, 2019; Pariser, 2011; Wagner, 2019). Many bubbles have many boundaries, and where many boundaries meet, trivialities become the subject of conflicts, and petty things gain importance. And in developing spaces 1 there are many material nullities where conflicts can develop. Pillepalle landscapes gain importance and dynamics.

Many elements from the realms of non-landscapes are integrated into landscapes but are also quickly dropped again. In the meantime, however, they become a medium of conflict, not least because, in the effort to generalise individual understandings, other understandings are also (often morally) devalued (Berr, 2017; Grau, 2017; Berr & Kühne, 2019). The unity of the selections of information, communication and understanding as communication (Luhmann, 1984) – is thereby dissolved because by using the code of morality, the understanding of information is denied from the outset (Luhmann, 1993, 2016).
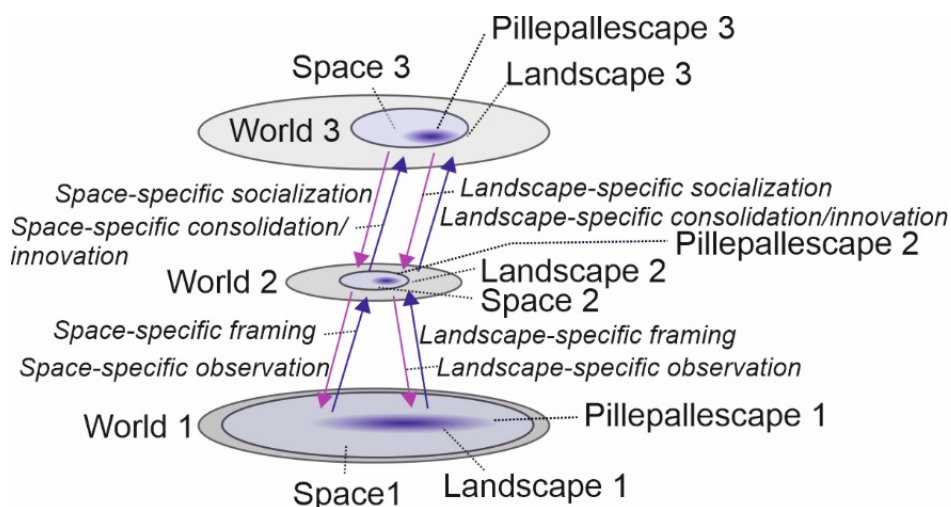
Figure 3. Pillepallescapes (highlighting their contingency and hybridity).

This systems theory perspective can be complemented by reflecting on the generation and maintenance of power (Bourdieu, 1984, 1992, 2004) because pillepalle can also be described as an expression of the need for a distinction of those individuals who (in many cases) believe themselves to own the definitional sovereignty of landscape. These are commonly the bearers of the c-mode. Thus, certain elements of space 1 are aestheticised and thus elevated into the realm of 'valuable landscape', while the 'middle taste' of the b-mode either has not (yet) preserved this or does not find access to it. Pillepallescapes (at all levels) can thus also always be seen as fields of distinctive devaluation of the taste of others (who do not have 'legitimate taste') and of the struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1992) of the b-modal access to landscape (the a-mode has no great significance in this context due to its self-sufficiency). The aestheticisation of old industrial objects and the invention of the 'old industrial landscape' can be understood as an expression of c-modal distinction, just like the invention of the 'cityscape', the 'urban landscape' or the 'urban-rural hybrids' (Kühn, 2001; Kühne, 2007; Kropp, 2015; Termeer, 2016; Weber, 2020).

Pillepallescape became landscape

One medium of separating landscape from non-landscape is the map. Cartography, in the sense of the above, can be understood as separating the essential from the non-essential, done according to c-modal conventions (Edler & Kühne, 2022). This form of cartography focuses on the permanent, the visual, that which can be measured, weighed and counted, i.e., it follows a positivist paradigm. The expression of this worldview is the topographic map. This kind of cartography is concerned with creating unambiguity – conversely, with destroying contingency.

Volatile phenomena (such as soundscapes or smellscapes) are banned from the realm of what is worthy of representation (Granö, 1997 [1929]; Lehmann, 1973; Porteous, 1985; Edler et al., 2019; Dickmann et al., 2021; Endreß, 2021). However, another form of cartography is also conceivable, a cartography that does not dedicate itself to the unification of pillepallescapes, but instead depicts precisely these objects and object constellations of space 1, which are located between landscape 1 and non-landscape 1, not least in order to contribute to sharpening the awareness of contingency and, to point out the need for translation between the different modes of landscape construction.

Conclusion

In our contribution, we have elaborated 'pillepalle' as a designation for something that is subject to polarised evaluation despite a certain edge of meaning. This, in turn, can provoke an intensified discussion. At the same time, 'pillepalle' does not present too many hurdles in terms of cognitive access. Based on this understanding, we were able to show that landscape as a whole satisfies the criteria for pillepalle. Furthermore, we identified a borderline between landscape and non-landscape, which we characterise as a pillepallescape, i.e., a fringe of attributions to landscape and non-landscape that exhibits considerable dynamism. As a result of the increasing differentiation of society, the importance of pillepallescapes increases, as does the social construction of realities in communication bubbles and the c-modal need for distinction.

Thus, the paradoxical situation of pillepalle in the landscape context becomes clear: the will for order and unambiguity produces contingency by multiplying the number of demarcations between landscape and non-landscape that strive for unambiguity. The understanding of pillepallescapes is thereby complicated to the point of impossibility by the proliferation of the refusal to accept communication by not wanting to understand other world views (here landscape constructs).

We have tied our article back to the theory of the Three Landscapes (in the tradition of Karl Popper) on the one hand, and to neopragmatism (in the tradition of Richard Rorty) on the other. With the theory of the Three Landscapes, the differentiated nature of 'landscape' could be made analytically accessible. Neopragmatism has opened up the possibility of integrating different theoretical approaches, such as the social constructivist understanding of the production of landscape between levels 2 and 3, the Luhmannian understanding of communication, with which we could illustrate the failure of landscape communication, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction, with the help of which we could outline a central pattern of c-modal communication.

With our contribution to pillepallescapes, we propose to look at landscape not with the expectation of finding unambiguity, but polyvalence and hybridity – that is, to allow contingency. An expression of this contingency-sensitive landscape construction, including the pillepallescapes, is the development of cartography

(not as a replacement of traditional ones, but as a supplement to them), which makes pillepallescapes 1 the object of its activity.

Our work on pillepallescapes integrates the approach of neopragmatism and also the play with irony. Our intention was also to take a self-ironic look at the c-mode's distinctive behaviour – in the wake of Richard Rorty's approach – a concern that explicitly distances itself from the widespread behaviour of c-modal logic to generate itself as the holder of interpretive sovereignty over landscape.

Acknowledgement

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