Olaf Kühne / Ralf Vogler / Karsten Berr

Authenticity, Landscape and Tourism: Criticism of a Common Coalescence

Abstract

Both tourism and landscape academia heavily and passionately debate the authentic nature of both destination experiences and appearances. This paper attempts to bridge the gap between the concept of authenticity in landscape research and that in tourism studies. Using the landscape-related derivation of Popper's three world theory, the authors analyse various tourism and landscape-related phenomena that are typically used to determine authenticity in the two disciplines. As a result, they conclude that there is no such thing as an objectively authentic tourist experience, just as there is no such thing as an objectively authentic landscape. The appreciation of each is attained through the eyes and the perspective of the viewer and ultimately leads to a (social) construction of the authentic.

Keywords: authenticity, staging, theory of three landscapes, constructivism, authenticity dissonance, contingency

1. Introduction

'The tourist destroys what he is looking for by finding it.' This quote by Hans Magnus Enzensberger illustrates the dilemma of authenticity-seeking tourists. As soon as tourists enter the scenery of an 'authentic landscape', they are part of it and transform at least this specific portion into a touristic staging, thus destroying the sought-after 'authentic character' of this landscape experienced as such. The quote also illustrates the dependence of statements on specific structures and processes. As a follower of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School - in particular, Adorno took a critical stance against all developments that - as a result of the capitalist world order - led people away from their needs, which were understood as 'true'. For him, tourism was an expression of this. This also makes the concern of our contribution clear: dealing with the theoretical dependence on location with certain phenomena and their connections, such as landscape, authenticity, and tourism.

The touristic construction of the world is a common topic in tourism studies (Wang, 1999). To explain the pursuit of an authentic tourist experience, MacCannell (1973) describes it as a form of sentry duty in the tourist environment in which the supplier controls access to the 'authenticity'. Thus, the tourist perceives what is presented or assembled as authentic. Cohen (1988) criticised this unambiguous simplification. In contrast, he emphasises the evolving authenticity, in which even staged tourist attractions can develop a certain patina and thus authenticity over time. Wang (1999) is to be noted for the attempt to typologies authenticity in various forms: object-focused, activity-focused, and projection-focused. Without getting into the discussion of each model, the core of the debate revolves around the 'how' of the authenticity of the experience. However, what makes up an authentic tourist element remains obscure, independent of the person experiencing it.

Olaf Kühne, PhD, Chair of Urban and Regional Development, Department of Geography, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany; ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1815-3745; e-mail: olaf.kuehne@uni-tuebingen.de

Ralf Vogler, PhD, Corresponding Author, Research Professor, Institute of Tourism, Travel & Hospitality, Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences, Heilbronn, Germany; ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7188-2942; e-mail: ralf.vogler@hs-heilbronn.de

Karsten Berr, PhD, Research Assistant, Department of Geography, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany; e-mail: olaf.kuehne@uni-tuebingen.de

Therefore, the study of landscape in the context of tourism and authenticity is based on the following considerations: First, landscape is central to tourism; hardly any tourism does not refer to some kind of tangible and intangible objects subjected to an aesthetic synthesis. Secondly, there is a long debate on 'authenticity' in landscape and tourism research. Here, parallels and differences can be found, contributing to the term's contouring. Thirdly, landscape research reflects on a long tradition of theory formation, which can also be operationalised for tourism research.

Considering current discussions on landscape theory, this article aims to ask whether 'authenticity' is a meaningful concept for dealing with the question of tourist approaches to landscape. The basic understanding of landscape represented here is a constructivist one. This means that landscape is not understood as a physical object but constitutively as a social construction that is individually actualised and then projected into material spaces (Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Kühne, 2018; Kühne & Fischer, 2022). Such a constructivist position is thus in line with other approaches to landscape theory (such as positivist or essentialist approaches). This development of a landscape-theoretical classification is, as today it is no longer self-evident – especially in times of international scientific debate – what is meant by 'landscape' (see especially D'Angelo, 2021; Kühne, 2019; Winchester et al., 2003; Wylie, 2007) – and there can no longer be a universally valid definition of it (Gailing & Leibenath, 2012, 2015). The same is true for the term 'authenticity'. As with 'landscape', this term cannot be determined by specifying essential characteristics within the framework of essentialist theories. Instead, it is a matter of contingent ascriptions that, like 'landscape', are made by individuals within the contingent framework of patterns of interpretation, categorisation and evaluation, whereby these ascriptions are socially and culturally mediated, often also through theoretical guidelines (as in Enzensberger).

This paper intends to present an interdisciplinary approach that uses geographical, sociological and philosophical components to address a topic with a sizeable discursive presence in tourism studies. Interdisciplinarity is a tool to deal with the contingency of the central concepts of landscape and authenticity to reach conclusions not aimed at determining 'the essence' of 'landscape' or 'authenticity'. Such a view not only tends to (moral) generalisation but also to authoritarianism.

Following the state of debate in landscape and tourism research, the paper presents relevant landscape theories and Popper's Three Worlds Theory and its derivation of the theory of the three landscapes as a framework for analysis and further discussion. On this basis, the concept of 'authenticity' is discussed and defined in more detail in contrast to and as a variant of 'staging'. Subsequently, understanding both the construction of 'landscape' and 'authenticity' as a striving for social distinction is possible. This allows understanding the construction of an 'authentic landscape' in tourism and defining it in more detail. In conclusion, it is argued that the contingency of 'landscape' and 'authenticity' should be accepted calmly and considered accordingly in theory development and empirical operationalisation.

2. Authenticity debates in tourism and landscape research

The debate about the nature of authenticity and its application in tourism has been conducted passionately and for quite some time. Within the debate process, methodological and conceptual considerations are often underrepresented (Rickly, 2022). The foundation comprises works that emphasise the original experience of the tourist (Cohen, 1988). Historical references were made in the early stages of the debate (Bruner, 1994), which also included aspects of staging (MacCannell, 1973). Both Bruner (1994) and MacCannell (1973) displayed the need for tourism studies in the early days to use insights from other disciplines and fields to shape the authenticity debate (Rickly, 2022).

As summarized by Wang (1999), the consideration of the individual perspective and experience of tourists is the common ground of this debate. This constructivist view represents the backbone of those methodological approaches related to tourist authenticity (Rickly, 2022). However, they are not the only ones, as objectivist

elements are also considered in the literature (Andriotis, 2009; Belhassen et al., 2008; Engeset & Elvekrok, 2015). Another foundational stream emerged and integrated existentialist elements to bridge the gap between constructivist and objectivist elements of authenticity (Brown, 2013; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Kirillova & Lehto, 2015; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017). Regarding the object of consideration in tourism studies, the focus is on the tourists and their experiential world (Brida et al., 2012; Nguyen & Cheung, 2015). Because of the attention given to the tourist in the debate, the question of who a tourist or what tourist types exists is inevitably linked (McCabe, 2005). Based on this, the questions arise - which destinations are authentic and which are staged for tourism? In this regard, the interaction between the tourist experience and the destination has generated an exciting sub-debate about staged or falsified experiences (Hall, 2007; Yeoman et al., 2007). In landscape studies, the issue of authenticity has gained prominence in recent decades. This is particularly true in the context of debates about the construction of 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage (Harvey et al., 2019; Riesto, 2018; Vileniske, 2008; Zube & Pitt, 1981). In connecting those, a tone critical of modernisation becomes evident, delivered from either a conservative-essentialist or a Marxist background. A particular challenge to 'expectations of authenticity' is apparent not only from mass tourism but especially from mass media staging, which encouraged commercialisation that did not correspond to the authenticity of the 'essence of the landscape' (e.g., Arfini, 2019; Butler, 2011; Fuqua, 2012).

Despite these debates regarding destinations and their role in authenticity, they are only addressed in a few contexts, mainly related to marketing and communication (Rickly, 2022). Contributions that go beyond this are addressing cultural characteristics (Kovacs, 2013; Lin & Lee, 2020; Ram et al., 2016) and landscape aspects (Croes et al., 2013; Franch et al., 2008), which mainly play a role in product design (L'Espoir Decosta & Andéhn, 2018).

3. Landscape theories – A contextualisation for further considerations

Given the outlined state of discussion concerning the 'how' of authenticity in the context of 'landscape' and 'tourism', it is pertinent to contextualise and place these discussions within scientific theory. This is necessary to support a constructivist approach against essentialist and positivist approaches and decontextualised critical theories widespread in landscape research. Along those lines, further considerations can be developed. Independent of what exactly is or can be understood by 'authentic' or 'staged' in each case, these terms can be related to landscapes in varying ways. To provide a distinctive and effective conceptual differentiation for these attribution possibilities, revisiting the theory of the three landscapes developed based on Popper's three-world theory appears useful. This is followed by a historical review of the development and semantic context of the terms 'authenticity' and 'staging', which currently culminates in an aesthetic concept of the same and an overview of the diverse ways these terms can be attributed to the 'three landscapes. Given the aesthetic concept of 'authenticity' and 'staging', a connection to Bourdieu (1987/1979) and his theory of taste exists, explaining the frequently observed striving for social distinction using 'authenticity' regarding 'landscape' and 'tourism'. Through these conceptual and theoretical distinctions, the meaning of tourism and how tourism phenomena can be explained become explainable. Concluding, the aspect of the contingency of 'landscape', 'authenticity' and 'staging' in the context of tourism is emphasised to promote a more harmonious scientific discussion about the terms mentioned above and a more relaxed every day (self-)location of touristic (re) thinking, discourse, and behaviour in the light of these terms. Depending on the chosen essential position of landscape theory - the question of the 'authenticity' of landscape in the context of tourism turns out to be very different. The recourse to landscape research enables tourism research to draw on a research tradition that is more than two centuries old to make it conceptually available.

The primary positions of landscape theory serve as a general orientation to the current discussion of landscape theory and as a basis for classifying the talks about the authenticity of landscapes produced by tourism.

Numerous overviews illustrate the state of debate (Bourassa, 1991; D'Angelo, 2021; Kühne, 2019, 2021; Winchester et al., 2003; Wylie, 2007).

The essentialist understanding of landscape portrays landscapes as 'entireties' based on an 'essence'. This lies concealed behind the objects and reveals itself in specific 'essential' components. In addition, there are 'accidental' components. 'Accidental' components are found only by chance and are not explicitly encountered (such as neophytes, bungalows, shopping malls, etc.). 'Essential' components of 'landscape', however, are, from this point of view, created by nature alone or by a century-long reciprocal imprint of nature and culture (historical landforms, farmhouses, etc.). Accordingly, preservation norms for sure (essential) landscape components arise from essentialist landscape research (Gailing & Leibenath 2012). Positivist landscape research rejects such a metaphysical notion. It considers landscape an object that can be captured empirically by measuring, weighing, and counting and can be divided into different categories (such as vegetation, climate, settlements, etc.). Thus, 'landscape' becomes a "real reality" (Schultze, 1973, p. 203) container filled with different elements. The elements relate to each other in a – mathematically measurable – way. This transformation into mathematically determinable units with their correlations makes them accessible to computer-aided modelling (cf. Tilley, 1997). Positivistic landscape research aims to analyse relationships. Norms of a landscape's development are irrelevant to it. The third 'traditional' stream of these approaches to landscape is the constructivist one. Each approach differs in detail but shares a common understanding. Landscape is neither a speculative 'being' nor does it need material objects as constitutive elements.

In contrast, it is shaped by social constructions. Social constructivist landscape theory focuses on socialisation processes, such as how interpretations, categorisations, and valuations of and about landscapes are propagated. It also considers social and cultural differences, what material objects are understood as 'landscape', and how they are understood (e.g., in Cosgrove, 1984; Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Kühne, 2008). Radical constructivist landscape research seeks to question – following Luhmann (1986) – how social subsystems (such as politics, economy, science, etc.) generate landscape communicatively in different ways and which corresponding social consequences arise. In particular, the landscape is a medium for making money, generating power, or (publishable) knowledge. Discourse theory landscape research, on the other hand, asks questions such as what different discourses involving landscape can be found (e.g., as 'historically grown' vs. 'industrial'), but especially how these discourses distinguish themselves from one another and strive for hegemonic power (e.g. Weber, 2019).

Such power mechanisms are also the subject of critical landscape research. This research deals with the unequal power distribution of landscape, primarily based on Marxist thoughts. Pivotal to this is the notion of the 'duplicity of landscape' (Daniels, 1989). Landscape is comprehended from a constructivist perspective (landscape as a power-determined idea) on the one hand and as a positivist object (landscape as a power-determined physical space) on the other hand. The critique focuses on the rationale of utilisation of space, where capitalism is hegemonic towards other claims to landscape (aesthetic or political) or manipulates them to ensure its power. Critical theories (especially those based on Marxism) can be accused of arguing from an essentialist point of view. They assume an 'essence' of man that alienates himself through capitalism. In addition, a broader discussion is possible. According to Bourdieu (1987/1979), the question can be raised about the significance capital has in the production of landscape, not only economic but also social and cultural capital (together: symbolic capital). This is connected to the question of the importance of the different availabilities of the various capitals to produce landscape and how the standards of landscape aesthetics are produced to establish social distinction (Kühne, 2008).

Inherent in these conceptions of landscape is a separation of subject and object, to a greater or lesser degree, which the 'more-than-representational theories' (Lorimer, 2005; Waterton, 2013) seek to overcome. As such, phenomenological landscape research concerns phenomena - entities understood as things and

events that present themselves to the world (Tilley, 1997). This concern is less focused on description and understanding but more precisely on individual experience (Tilley, 1997), whereby phenomenological landscape explorers become narrators of their own experiences of space (from a constructivist perspective: interpreted as landscape) (Tuan, 1989). In contrast, actor-network theory (ANT) places social, technical, and natural entities and factors equally (Latour & Roßler, 2007/2005). Therefore, these factors "are not treated as explanans, but as explananda" (Schulz-Schaeffer, 2000, p. 188). Within assemblage theory, the perspective is initiated from a constructivist foundational approach to give meaning to materialities according to the criterion of social relevance (Mattissek & Wiertz, 2014). If the theoretical approaches presented up to this point are formulated contrastingly, often in competition with each other, neopragmatic landscape research takes a different approach: it strives to work out the correlations of various theoretical approaches to find a suitable understanding sensitive to the contingency of complex objects from multiple perspectives (e.g., Kühne, 2023).

4. Popper's three worlds theory and its derivation to the theory of three landscapes – An analytical framework

The three-world-theory and its derivation into the 'theory of the three landscapes' have the following functions for this paper: First, it forms a quasi-ontological framework and assumes a causal dependency on the outside world but does not assume that its laws are mappable (Rorty, 1997). However, since the Three Worlds Theory has proven itself in understanding the world, it is a quasi-ontology. Secondly, 'landscape' is a complex phenomenon that contains social constructions, individual approaches, and material manifestations. In this respect, access via the three worlds or landscapes facilitates the concept's complexity by creating a framework of order. Thirdly, the theories mentioned above also focus on different levels, the social, the individual and the material, and their connections in various ways. With the help of the three worlds theory and its derivative, the theory of the three landscapes, the theoretical approaches can also be structured in terms of knowledge (also about their suitability for specific questions; see Kühne & Berr, 2022).

To ensure a diversity of perspectives (which has already been proposed by Popper, 2011/1947), this paper follows an approach derived from his three worlds theory (Popper, 1979; Popper & Eccles, 1977), called the theory of three landscapes (Koegst, 2022; Kühne, 2020). Popper divides into the world of cultural content (World 3), the world of individual consciousness (World 2), and the world of material objects (World 1). World 3 and World 1 are interconnected via World 2 (only the consciousness can take up cultural contents), whereby human beings participate in all three worlds. Their bodies are part of World 3, and their consciousness (World 2) relates to World 3, as well. In this respect, they translate the contents of World 3 into World 1 as a physical manifestation and can also innovate World 3 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Connections between the three worlds by Karl Popper
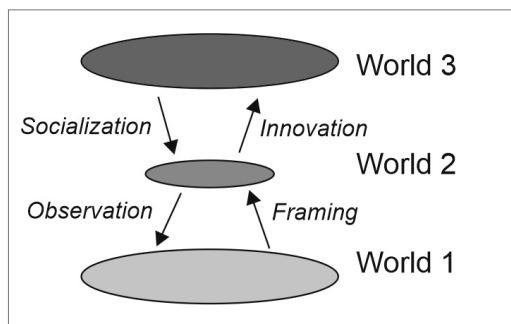
Source: Kühne (2020).

However, as a complex concept, landscape cannot simply be derived from World 1. Landscape requires World 3: During socialisation, landscape patterns of categorisation, interpretation, and valuation are socially linked to World 2. Thereby, parts of Landscape 3 relate to World 2, creating Landscape 2. Applying learned patterns of interpretation, value, and categorisation to World 1 creates Landscape 1. Consequently, Landscape 3 is not always wholly transferred to Landscape 2. The translation happens selectively, and the experience of World 1 as Landscape 2 depends entirely on those parts of the 'World' presented in the landscape experience (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
The subsets of the three landscapes in the three worlds
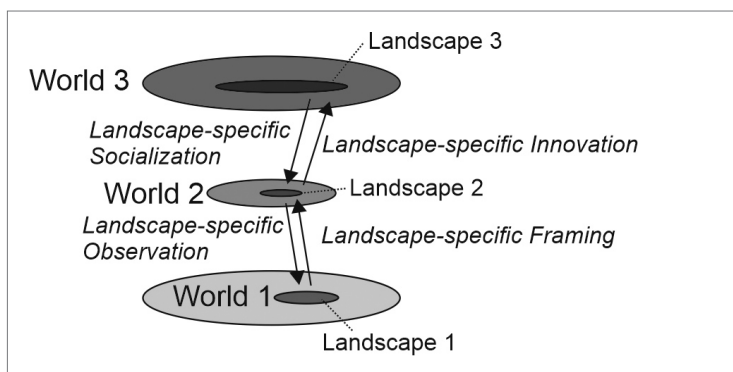
Source: Kühne (2020).

Landscape is strongly related to space, even if it is not congruent with it (otherwise, there would have been no need for a conceptual differentiation). A central difference is that the experience of space is a fundamental basis of human existence. Humans experience themselves in their physicality to space and other objects (Space 1) (Piaget & Inhalder, 1975/1947). On the other hand, Landscape is - as has already been made clear - socially constructed and is actualised in repercussions between Landscape 3 and Landscape 2. Landscape and space are thus shaped on three levels. Landscape is not only an aesthetic-ecological case of space but also reaches beyond this in its meaning, for example, when 'landscape' is spoken of metaphorically, such as 'political landscape' (Kühne, 2023; Figure 3).
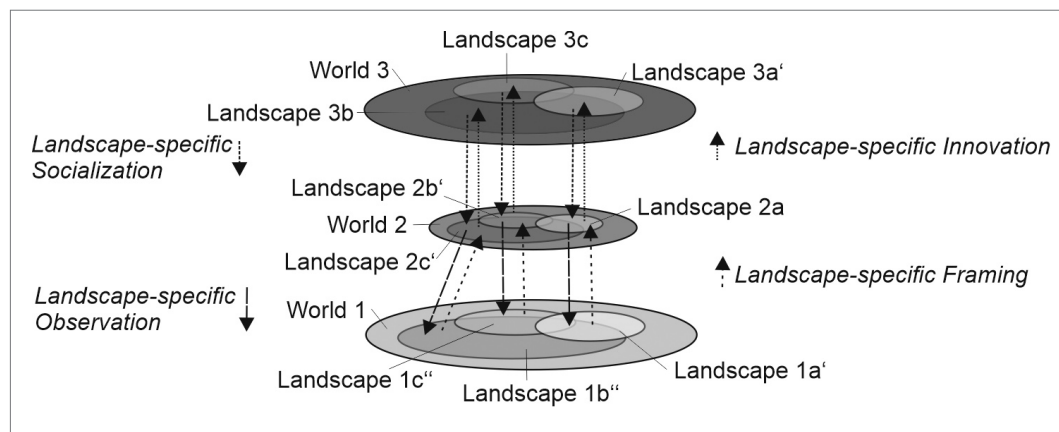
Figure 3
The relationship between landscape and space
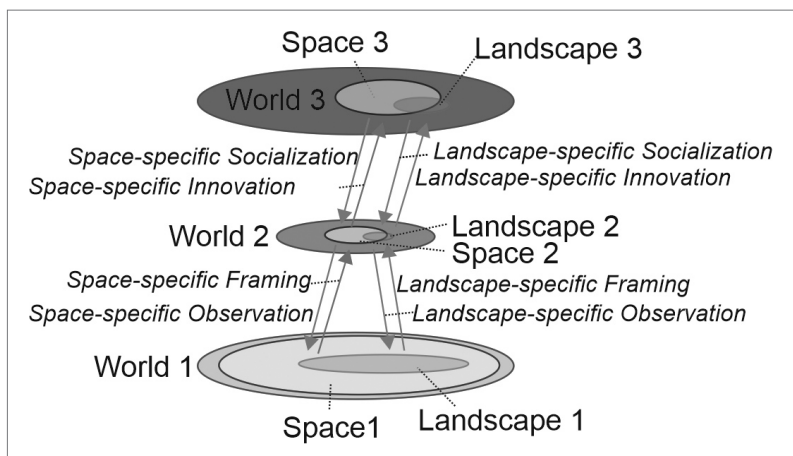
Source: Kühne & Berr (2022).

This differentiation is split into three modes of constructing landscape: Mode 'a' is the experience of individual material space in childhood. This typically happens under the guidance of significant others (especially family) emerging into a 'native normal landscape'. The resulting Landscape 1a corresponds to the norm of stability. In mode 'b', the landscape's socially shared thoughts shape Landscape 2 by teaching societal conventions of the landscape. In mode 'c', the emerging Landscape 2c acquires elements of expert knowledge, especially in landscape-related studies (e.g., geography and landscape architecture). The elements compete and distinguish themselves from both mode b and mode c. Especially in educational processes, mode c approaches to landscape transfer into mode b approaches. Accordingly, mode b+c hybrids emerge (Kühne, 2018, see Figure 3).

Figure 4
The landscape constructs

The landscape constructs (Figure 4) that result from the different modes are not entirely independent of each other. Still, they also only form intersections with each other on the various levels of the world. This makes it clear that the constitutive levels of landscape construction differ between the modes. In a-mode, they are on the level of landscape 2, and in b- and c-mode, they are on the level of landscape 3 (Kühne, 2020).

While positivist landscape research focuses on Landscape 1, social constructivist landscape theory primarily concerns the relations between Landscapes 2 and 3. Phenomenology focuses on the relation between Landscapes 1 and 2, while the radical constructivist and discourse theory approaches focus on Landscape 3. Critical perspectives, meanwhile, seek to connect the three levels but are thematically oriented towards 'power' and Marxism-based 'the power of economy'. Assemblage theory focuses on the interactions between Landscape 3 and Landscape 1, while actor-network theory is difficult to fit into the theory of the three landscapes. Ultimately, its actors can be understood as nodes in networks of varying degrees of hybridity of the three landscapes. Neopragmatism - as a meta-theoretical approach - combines suitable theories where theoretical foundations can change in the research process, depending on whether they can continue to prove themselves effective over time (Kühne & Berr, 2022).

At this point, the landscape's contingency becomes clear: there is not 'the one and true landscape' but many possible but not compelling understandings. In the sense we are advocating, the landscape is subdivided into different levels and is constructed very differently through various modes. Numerous theories have been developed in the c-mode that deal selectively with certain aspects of 'landscape'.

5. 'Authenticity' and 'staging' of landscape

Landscape and tourism research discuss whether and to what extent tourism and tourist-travelled landscapes are 'authentic' or 'staged' (e.g. Aschenbrand, 2017; Kühne & Berr, 2023; Zukin, 2010). This is important, as

authenticity is monetizable at the destination level (Burkert & Chilla, 2019; Mose, 2019). Regardless of the question, the terms 'authentic' and 'staged' relate to different 'Worlds' or 'Landscapes' in the sense of Popper's three worlds theory and the theory of three landscapes. First, consider what can be understood by an 'authentic landscape' (at the level of Landscape 1): Under what circumstances would a Spanish finca (rural property, farm) be perceived more authentically than a party zone in Mallorca - which is typically recognised as 'staged'? Alternatively, both may be considered 'staged' or specifically 'authentic'. This correlation to Landscape 1 already points to the social conventions of Landscape 3, which may be quite different. Related questions arise regarding World 2 and Landscape 2: Under what circumstances do temporary residents of a finca understand themselves as more authentic compared to partying Mallorca tourists? Is there a shared understanding of 'authentic' tourists versus tourists who merely enact their lifestyle, attitudes, or beliefs? The same applies to the tourist offer. What is authentic, what is staged, and under what circumstances? Also, it can be asked comparably, are the cultural and social frameworks and conditions (World 3 or Landscape 3) considered 'authentic' or 'staged' and under what circumstances? This drives the question of 'authentic' versus 'staged' tourism.

These thoughts lead to a distinguishing among the questions of 'authenticity' and 'staging' in the dual context of landscape and tourism in correlation to the three-world theory incorporating landscape authenticity/staging (World/Landscape 1), personal authenticity/staging (World/Landscape 2) and cultural and social authenticity/staging (World/Landscape 3) as well as the social conventions under which these questions are discursively negotiated. Before unfolding this differentiation, another fundamental question emerges: whether the two terms have an equivalence or is one superior? Isn't authenticity also a form of (self-)staging, staging, therefore, being the superordinate term to authenticity?

Etymologically, 'authentic' derives from the ancient Greek 'aùthentes', meaning "lord, ruler, someone who accomplishes something with own hands, then also by own force, so also originator" (Röttgers & Fabian, 2019, column 691). In terms of action theory, this addresses the 'agency' (Gethmann, 2006) of individuals, thus 'authenticity' in the personal sense of World 2. In the twentieth century, the concept of 'authenticity', conveyed by Heidegger's concept of 'ownness' ('Eigentlichkeit', Heidegger, 1975) entered existential philosophy. Therefore, 'authentic' can be used synonymously with actual – and not only in the sense of a 'pragmatic centrist' (Gethmann, 2002) 'agency', but also morally concerning human attitudes (World 2) and sociocultural to human products (Röttgers & Fabian 2019). These products of human action can be material parts of World 1 (artefacts, tools, commodities, etc.) and immaterial parts of World 3 (landscape stereotypes, conventions, ideas, etc.). For example, an 'authentic friend' and an 'authentic personality' (World 2) exist, like a 'true landscape' (Berr, 2020; Dollinger, 2013; Kühne, 2021)

Existential philosophy focuses on an individual who is not only able to 'create' himself as a 'heroic individual' (Kersting, 2007, p. 15). Still, it should also be 'authentic' in the sense of originality, unaffectedness, sincerity, and truthfulness. Accordingly, this approach provides an individual with the freedom to design a uniquely individual life (World 2) in the face of a social world (World 3) and the material world (World 1), perceiving 'authenticity' as 'originality'.

The conflation of the authentic aspects of unaffectedness, sincerity, and truthfulness with aesthetic terms (e.g., 'beautiful') and cognitive terms (e.g., 'true') is based on the tradition of the triad 'true-beautiful-good' (Berr, 2020; Kurz, 2015). In the tradition of a harmonious understanding of beauty, the 'beautiful' can also be understood as being 'authentic' or 'truthful'. For example, people who exhibit authenticity or truthfulness are perceived as 'beautiful' in everyday life. Habermas relates 'truthfulness' to a respective potential "speaker" who claims truthfulness "for the expression of the subjective experiences to which he is privileged to have access" (Habermas, 1995a, p. 412). 'Truthfulness' in this sense exists as a congruence of external appearance and internal motive (Habermas, 1995a). Therefore, Habermas assigns this conception of authenticity as truthfulness to the action type of 'dramaturgical acting' with an 'expressive' essential attitude' (Habermas, 1995a) and thus to the aesthetic sphere of a theatre of acting, and thus also to staging, masquerade, and dissimulation.

In this way, the concept of 'authenticity' is connoted with 'originality', 'genuineness', 'unaffectedness', 'truthfulness' and 'sincerity' and moves into the (supposed) twilight of insincere acting, pretending, the mere (self-)staging of vain masquerades or masquerades connected with opaque intentions. The simple fact that individuals or persons in society all take on a 'role' and, thus, indeed ', play theatre' has been illustrated and theoretically explained by Goffman (2011/1959). Etymologically, the ancient Greek word 'persona' comes from the theatre world and refers to the mask through which the actor's voice can be heard. Subsequently, the 'persona' is not an 'authentic' person who stands unmasked, genuine, and unaffected in front of the audience, but the mask through which a person (the actor) speaks and acts as an individual. The "roleless human being is a non-existent being for society and sociology" (Dahrendorf, 1971/1958, pp. 57–58). Following Goffman and Dahrendorf, 'authenticity' can be understood as playful self-presentation. It covers consciously or unconsciously applied individual strategies of persons to integrate themselves communicatively and interactively into social worlds and to present themselves accordingly within these. Consistently, 'authenticity' appears as a form of 'staging'. In this understanding, 'authenticity' is not an expression of a static 'essential' inwardness, a 'self' or an 'I', which must seek an appropriate expression to communicate itself 'genuinely' or 'authentically'. 'Authenticity' is self-enacted, for example, by self-telling a story about who or what one wants to be, believes to be, or intends to pretend to be (Schapp, 1953). In this manner, 'staging' would be understood as a generic term to 'authenticity', as the latter can be subordinated to 'staging'.

The relationship between authenticity as truthfulness and theatrical production has been unfolded to personal authenticity and staging (World 2) because personal authenticity is the interface between World 1 and 3. A specific conception of truth is crucial for the material (World 1) and the sociocultural (World 3). That being 'true', or 'truth', is traditionally defined within the framework of the 'correspondence theory of truth' (cf. exemplarily Gloy, 2004) as "correspondence of cognition with its object" (Kant, 1959/1781, B 82; cf. Kühne & Berr, 2021, pp. 65–66). The corresponding understanding of truth can also be called 'correctness' (Hegel, 1970/1830; Heidegger, 1975). Other considerations conceive 'truth' as "the agreement of a content with itself" (Hegel 1970/1830, p. 85) - that is, the agreement of an object with its concept. Thus, "one speaks, as an example, of a true friend for a person whose conduct is following the concept of friendship" (Hegel, 1970/1830], S. 85; original emphasis). Something tangibly existing (World 1 or Landscape 1) is thus measured against an ideal conception of something 'true' or 'truthful'. This is demonstrated via a 'true landscape' (cf. Kühne, 2021) contrasted against the traditional ideal of 'Arcadia' (cf. Berr, 2019; Eisel & Körner, 2009). This approach is problematic because it confuses "objectivity and truth" (Habermas, 1995b): Landscape is constructed as an object. This representational construction makes attribution as 'true' possible (Kühne, 2021).

Phenomena of World 3 or Landscape 3 may be constructed or evaluated as 'authentic' or 'staged'. The attributes 'true', 'truthful', 'authentic', 'staged', 'artificial', etc., to phenomena of World 1 or Landscape 1 lead to corresponding attributions to World 3 or Landscape 3 phenomena. A well-known attribution of the contrasting terms is found in tourism involving tourists and so-called 'travellers' (cf. McCabe, 2005). In the conventional sense of mass tourism, tourists are accused of acquiescence to staged stereotypical expectations, patterns of perception, interpretation, and evaluation, and corresponding habitual behaviours and actions regarding the country they visit, manifesting a merely staged demeanour. On the contrary, 'travellers' are 'authentic' regarding an unaffected openness to the equally 'authentic' peculiarities of the country visited.

Synthesising the above, we can conclude that both 'landscape' and 'authenticity' cannot be clearly defined based on an 'essence'. Like authenticity, the landscape is created by actualising social interpretations, categorisations and individual evaluations. These, in turn, can have an innovative effect on the social construction of landscape and authenticity (repercussions between levels 2 and 3). People with c-modal access to landscape or authenticity are granted a socially higher degree of possibility for change. Ultimately, it is also the social task of science to develop new ways of interpreting and dealing with the world to test their suitability (Rorty, 2023). Critical research makes it clear that this idea reflects an idealised state: patterns of interpretation,

categorisation and evaluation are not only developed as proposals for solving concrete problems but also to secure power or privileges (for example, in c-mode). These are secured not least through mechanisms of distinction, for instance, in the degradation of 'tourists' compared to 'travellers'. From a critical perspective, tourists do not know or do not want to know their 'true' needs. At this point, it becomes clear that what is called 'landscape' can be evaluated differently. It also becomes clear that the construction of authenticity strongly depends on the chosen (explicitly chosen) theoretical point of reference.

6. The construction of landscape and authenticity - Striving for social distinction

If 'authenticity' – as presented above – is not understood as 'true' in the epistemological sense or as 'directly given' in the ontological sense but rather as 'unaffected' from an aesthetic perspective, the question of the social production and enforcement of aesthetic judgments arises. According to Kant (1959/1790), 'taste' is a social transmission mechanism of aesthetic judgments in social contexts. Here, taste is not immutable but "socially, spatially, and temporally conditioned" (Illing, 2006, p. 7) and what counts as 'good' or 'bad' taste depends on "the point from which other tastes, thus defined, are judged" (Illing, 2006, p. 7). The judgment of taste, meanwhile, is not a purely aesthetic matter; it is imbued with moral norms. The lifestyles of others are measured against the standards of one's lifestyle. What is considered a 'beautiful' or 'authentic' landscape (1) is not solely dependent on socially defining processes but is also socially differentiated and the object of social processes of distinction (Kühne, 2008). According to Bourdieu (1987/1979), 'legitimate taste' determines aesthetic standards. Its bearers have a sufficient endowment of symbolic capital, especially cultural capital (unequivocal knowledge of which valid aesthetic standards are deliberately disregarded to produce new standards), and economic capital, to be free from the constraint of power-draining breadwinning. The 'middle taste' tries to emulate the 'legitimate taste' by imitation, in the absence of symbolic capital (primarily cultural, but also economic capital securing the necessary availability of time) is characterised by the choice of incorrectly aestheticized objects, by the misinterpretation of objects as well as an erroneous belief of being able to gain ascension to the 'legitimate taste' (Resch, 1999). 'Popular taste' is characterised by centring on the aestheticization of experiences and events vital to one's own life, which is linked to the expectation of social conformity. Accordingly, the extravagance of 'legitimate taste' is not imitated but is accepted as 'given'. According to this logic, a trivialisation of cultural goods takes place. Aestheticized by 'legitimate taste', they become devalued through imitation by 'middle taste' and distinguishably diminished as 'kitsch'. Finally, objects and object configurations – decoupled from their aesthetic history – find themselves in 'popular taste'. For Bourdieu (1987/1979), "favourite 'kitschy' motifs such as mountain landscapes, sunsets by the sea, and forests" function as an expression of the 'aesthetics' of the lower classes. Thus, this 'trivialised' (romantic) landscape experience has become uninteresting to 'legitimate tastes' for aestheticized contemplation. It is only with the transition from industrial to post-industrial society (Bell, 1999/1973) that Landscape 1 regained a distinctive function for 'legitimate taste' with the aestheticization of old industrial objects (Höfer & Vicenzotti, 2013).

Society finds itself in a continuous process of differentiation. The notion of constituting three classes, with their respective tastes, has already become fragile by the end of the twentieth century (Beck, 2006; Nassehi, 1999). Particularly against the increasing importance of Internet-based social media, a further differentiated structure of society occurs in small-group discourse spaces, which exhibit a pronounced distinctive behaviour (Nagle, 2017; Wagner, 2019). This is often associated with generating specific taste patterns within the discourse community, producing a hierarchical procedural system like Bourdieu's (1987/1979). This, in turn, also results in the pluralisation of landscape aesthetic ideas in Mode B, imitating Mode C patterns of interpretation, categorisation, and evaluation (Fontaine, 2017; Kühne et al., 2021; Linke, 2020).

Part of these differentiation processes is a nuanced construction of landscape authenticity, depending on the essential attitude of landscape theory: Essentialists consider a landscape to be authentic if its manifestations correspond to its 'essence' as shaped over centuries with little modern or postmodern influence. A classical critical view following the Frankfurt School incorporates this as well: 'Authentic' corresponds to the 'inner and outer nature of human'; it is not subject to the instrumental (judged as 'inhumane') logic of exploitation of economy and the politics serving it. From a positivist perspective, 'authenticity' is measured by the suitability of a landscape conceived as an 'Object 1' to transform it into a quantitative model by measuring, weighing, and counting. Following Carnap's influential logical and empirical criterion of meaning, which even surpasses positivism (Carnap, 1966/1928), other criteria of ascribing authenticity used for positivism can only be 'meaningless' or 'metaphysical' gaudiness. Constructivist theories of landscape take a meta-perspective on authenticity, asking social constructivist questions about which social construction processes form the basis for constructing certain Landscape 1 areas as authentic and which areas are not genuine. Radical constructivism queries to what extent the construct 'authenticity of landscape' can resonate with social subsystems, such as the economic subsystem, through the possibility of generating economic power through tourism. From a perspective informed by Bourdieu, the question is to what extent processes of distinction contribute to constructing an 'authentic landscape'. From a discourse theory perspective, the question arises to what extent, using 'authenticity' (of landscape and tourism), do these distinctive claims strive for hegemony or assert themselves, thus seeking to discredit alternative interpretations, categorisations, and valuations: often not only aesthetically but also morally (more detailed in this context: Kühne, 2019; Kühne et al., 2023).

7. The construction of 'authentic landscape' in tourism

The preceding thoughts apply to several tourism phenomena and can help classify tourist activity as 'authenticity', such as tourist landscape construction. This applies first to the expectation of experiencing Landscape 1, an essential driving force for tourist activities. This is important in outdoor activities, where Space 1 is constructed as Landscape 1 and is a 'natural' attractor, and in all other forms of tourism whose context is given by its specific landscape. Thus, specifically, tourist circuits and routes travelled exist because of Landscape 1 being passed through (McGrath et al., 2020), even if the most culturally and historically designated segments are the actual purpose of the trip, and these do not have to be synthesised into Landscape 1. Such interactions between specific places and a more comprehensive 'landscape' are meaningful with cruise ship travel and ground-based travel such as round trips by bus, train and road trips by car (Ibid.).

Recently, these interactions between Landscape 1 and the construction of authenticity have become evident in the Slow Tourism and Slow Travel movements. Both postulate that only the slow traveller can travel authentically and sustainably (Caffyn, 2012; Meng & Choi, 2016). While it is undeniable that the tourist, especially the 'critical' tourist that prefers to be understood as a 'traveller' - in confirmation of their desire for social distinction (McCabe, 2005) through this slower form of travel – does have the possibility to experience the Landscape 1 travelled through more intensively. However, Space 1, interpreted as Landscape 1, does not change. Thus, at least Space 1, with the cultural and historical content attributed to it, does not change because of the traveller's velocity. It cannot become more 'authentic' in the sense of being 'truer' on the object level of 'Level 1', per se.

As a result of this conception, only the aspect of the individual experience remains – as a relationship of Landscape 2 to Landscape 1 – which is changed by the temporal aspect (Wang, 1999). Even here, it is difficult to identify an 'increase in authenticity' of the landscape. While it is true that it is easier to dive deeper into Landscape 1 and more accessible to record more minor details, this does not equate to 'higher authenticity'. Otherwise, Disneyland, as an example of a widely understood epitome of staging, especially in Mode C and

Mode B, would become a haven of authenticity if visitors only rode roller coasters long enough or were to have an endless conversation with Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck.

The idea of an 'authentic experience' requires partial acceptance since it represents the core of the authenticity debate in tourism. The possibility of sensory perception of the minor details in Space 1 interpreted as Landscape 1 enables the slow tourist to engage more intensively with aspects of the specific Space 1 interpreted as Landscape 1 and to experience in terms of details as perhaps an authentic travel experience according to one's own (usually Mode b) Landscape 2 expectation. This kind of access also facilitates a correlation between one's expectations of Space 1, interpreted as Landscape 1 and a reflection on one's expectations (Landscape 2) and their fundamentals rooted in Landscape 3. If the authenticity expectation of World 2 is the basis of the authenticity considerations, one can also speak of an 'authentic roller coaster ride'. Again, it is not the theme park itself (as a selection of objects of Space 1) that becomes authentic as a counterpart to the landscape but rather the part of the experience that is special for the visitor himself.

The question is whether a destination or a part of such a destination, parallel to the cognitive dimension of the tourist (Space 2), cannot also have its own materially (Space 1) and culturally (Space 3) authentic elements, which, interwoven, make up the 'authenticity of the destination' or a specific part of the destination. Thus, in its effort to convey 'authentic destinations' to the tourist, destination marketing could still be ascribed a particular justification for this endeavour.

If the pursuit of the existentialistically constructed 'true essence' of a destination is seriously pursued (grounded in Space 3 but expected in the experience of Space 1), the following consequences arise:

(1) The acceptance of the destination as a place that 'is' as it 'is now' at the time of experience and, therefore, with all the elements of staging.

(2) The constant change of the destination is because of cultural, historical and tourism-related influences, such as changes in the labour market and changes caused by tourists and tourism use.

(3) The apparent dissonance between what is, thus, what the tourist sensually perceives and what the tourist wants to perceive is based on landscape expectations.

This enumeration of the initial assumptions within the authenticity debate in tourism mainly revolves around the tourist's construction. It omits the aspects of the material destination (as part of World or Landscape 1). Cultural development, part of the tourist experience, is included in the debate. It's worth noting that the corresponding perspective of a tourist destination's inhabitants (Mode a) is increasingly considered (Sims, 2009; Zhou et al., 2018).

The examination of the social construction of the tourist requires an examination of travel motivation. According to the general theory of push and pull factors (Dann, 1977), one motive of the tourists is the desire to 'escape' from their familiar environment to a place of longing, however designed, in the sense of escapism. This compares to the scenic 'Arcadia' and thus an individually romanticising idea (cf. Kühne & Berr, 2023a) of how the destination must appear (individual Landscape 2b, based on stereotypes of Landscape 3b). This shapes individual construction: Elements contradicting this idea are rejected as staging, and it is common in tourism to travel to places unknown to the tourist himself, at least during the initial encounter with Space 1 during the first visit. Thus, the experience of the destination at the site, as well as the Arcadian conception of it, is 'susceptible' to influences of the tourist service providers (Mode c) as well as media representations (in current times with the great abundance of information on the Internet, however, information about specific places is almost always available). These influences can mediate between the destination of the Space 1 and the tourist's imagination (Space 2b or Landscape 2b). However, the originators of these influences follow their interests, so an alternative interpretation of Space 1 is conveyed here (Hughes, 1995).

8. Conclusion: Everything is contingent or 'relax'!

The scientific and theoretical contextualisation and positioning of 'how' and the variability of 'authenticity' in the context of 'landscape' and 'tourism' establish a constructivist approach. It is a theoretical, explanatory, and epistemically fruitful guideline for the following considerations. Recourse to the theory of the three landscapes developed in the spirit of Popper's three-world theory proved to be a differentiating and functional concept of discerning ways to identify, analyse, and describe how the concepts of 'authenticity' and 'enactment' can be related to the three landscapes. The historical review of these terms' development and semantic context provides a reconstruction of actual meanings of 'authentic' and 'staged' in each case. It could be shown how initiating an etymologically action-based theoretical meaning of 'authenticity' as 'agency' can subsequently also be understood in the epistemological sense as 'true', in the ontological sense as 'directly given', or in the moral sense as 'giving up', to currently culminate in an aesthetic concept. As 'dramaturgical action' and an accompanying theatrical metaphor, 'authenticity' can be reconstructed as a form of '(self-)staging'. If the distinction between ('true') 'being' and ('false') 'appearance' is included, the 'authentic' is connoted and evaluated positively and the 'staged' negatively. However, a converse interpretation can construe '(self-) staging' as a positive act of freedom. However, because 'authenticity' can often be understood as 'unaffected' from this aesthetic perspective of 'dramaturgical action', while 'staging' can be understood as 'artificial', the question of the social production and social reasons for enforcing such aesthetic judgments arose. Given the aesthetic concepts of 'authenticity' and 'staging', this boiled down to Bourdieu's theory of taste. With this theory, the pursuit of social distinction by use of 'authenticity' can be explained whereby 'Landscape' and 'tourism' represent a gain in distinction.

The contingent constructed nature of 'authenticity' and 'staging' alongside their aesthetic and social potential for distinction is evident in the authenticity debates involving tourism. They revolve primarily around tourist construction and omit aspects of the material destination (as part of the World or Landscape 1). Taking a closer look at touristic activities, the terms mentioned can only be determined beyond their constructs in terms of content if refuge is sought in essentialist determinations. Decisive is considered as 'authentic' in one's milieu. Since there is an undeniable need for distinction (Aschenbrand, 2017), one's behaviour is constructed as authentic and distinctive from another's. In doing so, different Mode C borrowings occur to justify the authenticity of one's behaviour – presumably as rationally as possible. The Mode C preoccupation with tourism has distinguished itself and, in turn – following the distinctive logic of disciplinary self-preservation (less in terms of sociology: serving the progress of knowledge) – constantly makes new offers of interpretation.

Following the essential social constructivist perspective, the paper reconstructed landscape and authenticity as contingent and constantly changing social constructs. Since the ability to innovate from World 2 to World 3 is unequally distributed in society, the question of power becomes evident. This applies particularly in Mode C when individuals with expert special knowledge change the social construction of landscape or authenticity. In pursuing social recognition, the innovative patterns of interpretation, categorisation, and evaluation are imitated by Mode C construction of landscape and authenticity without the ability to communicate about landscape and authenticity at the Mode C level of differentiation. Influenced by these socially preformed patterns of interpretation, categorisation, and valuation, the individual forms their expectations of authenticity in Space 1, interpreted as landscape. Thus, 'Authenticity' is not to be found in Space 1 interpreted as landscape and not in Landscape 3 but is constitutively bound to Landscape 2. Individuals decide from which patterns of interpretation, categorisation, and valuation - especially from Landscape 3b, partly also Landscape 3c - they want to fall back on and thus update them accordingly. Since these patterns compete with each other, discursive efforts for hegemony exist. A concise Mode of discourse in tourism strives to understand the landscape as a 'real' object based on positivist interpretations of the world. Since positivism offers little potential for normative valorisation, in this case, it resorts to the construction of 'authenticity' at the level

of Landscape 1, a decision that is based on an essentialist understanding of landscape. This paper not only criticises such an understanding but offers a constructivist alternative.

Finally, the aspect of the contingency of 'landscape', 'authenticity', and 'staging' in the context of tourism needs emphasising, both to plead for a more unagitated scientific discussion around the terms mentioned and for a more unagitated day-to-day worldly (self-)location of tourist (re)thinking, acting and behaviour in the light of these terms. Starting from the basic assumption of the contingency of society, self, and language, as Richard Rorty (1998) puts forward, the contingency of landscape and 'authenticity' (each as a social construct) can be derived and made plausible. Landscape and authenticity do not necessarily have to be procured in socially constructed forms. Their individual experience and material manifestation in how they supposedly present themselves 'directly', along with other landscapes and other concepts or manifestations of authenticity, are possible on all three levels. Taking this idea of contingency along with the unnecessary and non-essential aspects of different ideas of 'authenticity', 'landscape' and 'tourism' seriously, these real-world constructions and attitudes can always be relativised, questioned, and undogmatically criticised just as dispassionately and (self-)ironically as scientific thematizations, conceptualisations, and theories. The same applies to the enjoyment of tourist offerings. No 'better' or 'worse' tourists regarding individual self-image exist. There is only the individually satisfied tourist (Luger, 2022), regardless of whether the satisfaction is based on a supposedly authentic or a staged experience. Participants in the often-agitated real-world debates or scientific discourses – usually based on the view to have recognised the 'essence of the authentic landscape' – can and should therefore be called out in these regards: "Relax! Nothing is set in stone, and nothing is a must."

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