



The Concept of *Landslag*: Meanings and Value for Nature Conservation

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**Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of a
Philosophiae Doctor degree in Geography

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Abstract

This thesis explores the Icelandic landscape concept *landslag*, envisaged here as a verbal cultural expression of meaningful relations between humans and nature. The main aim is to investigate the meanings of the concept and the value it may hold for the conservation of nature. In recent years, *landslag* has become a prominent concept in the nature conservation discourse in Iceland. Conceptual confusion arose when the concept was first methodically applied to identify possible nature conservation areas. Experts in nature conservation consequently called for a legal definition, which has prompted two separate definitions. The thesis seeks to explain the conceptual confusion which has complicated the incorporation of the concept into the nature conservation discourse. Four empirical studies investigate the meaning of *landslag* in different contexts: in the sagas of Icelanders in the 14th century; among the general public in the present; among experts in nature conservation; and in the general legislation about nature conservation. Qualitative research methodologies were applied, such as grounded theory, phenomenology, discourse analysis, and textual analysis. The results show that the concept of *landslag* is deeply rooted in culture and history. Within the nature conservation discourse, the meaning of the concept gradually changed because of the great emphasis put on scientific reasoning and methodologies originating in the natural sciences. In the present, *landslag* carries two meanings that differ in some fundamental aspects: a ‘culturally embedded’ meaning and a ‘technical’ meaning. This has caused difficulties in its incorporation in nature conservation. The thesis concludes that the culturally embedded meaning can be of great value in the nature conservation discourse, as it captures an aesthetic dimension that undeniably is an important part of conservation. It also suggests that the legal definition of *landslag* in the Act on Nature Conservation be revisited.

Keywords: *Landslag*, landscape concept, nature conservation, geography, phenomenology, conceptual analysis, Iceland.

Útdráttur

Hugtakið *landslag*: Merking og gildi fyrir náttúruvernd

Þessi ritgerð fjallar um hugtakið landslag, sem hér útleggst sem menningarbundið orð er tjáir merkingarbær tengsl milli manns og náttúru. Meginmarkmið ritgerðarinnar er að rannsaka merkingu hugtaksins og það gildi sem það kann að hafa fyrir náttúruvernd. Hugtakið hefur verið áberandi í náttúruverndarumræðu á Íslandi á síðastliðnum árum. Frá því fyrst var farið að beita því með markvissum hætti við val á náttúruverndarsvæðum hefur merking þess verið túlkuð með mismunandi hætti. Sérfræðingar úr röðum náttúruverndar hafa því kallað eftir skilgreiningu hugtaksins í lögum. Þetta hefur leitt til tveggja lagaskilgreininga á landslagi. Í ritgerðinni er leitast við að skýra þann margræða skilning sem torveldað hefur innleiðslu hugtaksins í náttúruvernd. Ritgerðin byggir á fjórum empirískum rannsóknum sem hver um sig skoðar merkingu landslags eins og hún birtist í mismunandi samhengi: í Íslendingasögunum á 14. öld; á meðal almennings í samtímanum; á meðal sérfræðinga í náttúruvernd; og í Lögum um náttúruvernd. Beitt var eigindlegum rannsóknaraðferðum sem ýmist byggja á grundaðri kenningu, fyrirbærafræðilegri greiningu, orðræðugreiningu eða textagreiningu. Niðurstöður þessara rannsókna sýna að íslenska landslagshugtakið á sér djúpar rætur í sögu og menningu þjóðarinnar. Í kjölfar aukinna áherslna á vísindaleg vinnubrögð í náttúruvernd hefur merking hugtaksins smátt og smátt tekið breytingum innan orðræðu náttúruverndar. Í dag hefur landslag tvær um margt óskildar merkingar: annars vegar „menningarbundna“ merkingu og hins vegar „tæknilega“ merkingu. Þetta hefur torveldað meðferð hugtaksins í náttúruvernd. Í ritgerðinni eru færð rök fyrir því að hin menningarbundna merking landslags hafi ótvírætt gildi fyrir náttúruvernd, þar sem hún felur í sér og vísar til fagurfræðilegrar upplifunar af náttúrunni sem er óneitanlega mikilvægur þáttur í náttúruvernd. Í ritgerðinni er jafnframt lagt til að skilgreining landslags í Lögum um náttúruvernd verði endurskoðuð.

Lykilorð: Landslag, náttúruvernd, landfræði, fyrirbærafræði, hugtakagreining, Ísland.

To my mother

Erla Waage

Preface

þannig varð það til
landslagið
sumum finnst það fallegt
landslag er aldrei
asnalegt

thus it came into being
the landscape
some find it beautiful
landscape is never
corny

(Birgisson, 2003, 169, my translation from Icelandic)

Using *landslag*/landscape as a metaphor for the human mind, this quotation from a novel by Bergsveinn Birgisson invites us to accept our humanity with all its imperfections, as one of its characters elaborates: “Landscape is never corny. Landscape is just the way it is and in this way people should look inwards. People are discontent and feel that some peaks should not exist within them, that some hills should be bigger”¹ (Birgisson, 2003, 188, my translation).

‘Corny landscape’ is an odd articulation of words and indeed landscape never is corny, if the quotation is to be taken literally. There is another articulation of words, though, in relation to landscape, that has become ‘corny’ in certain circles: The mention of beauty has become almost an embarrassment in the context of nature conservation in Iceland. The notion of *beautiful landscape*, and the idea that beauty plays an important part in nature conservation, has apparently for many become ‘a peak that should not exist’. Why is that? Is landscape no longer considered beautiful? Or is it simply no longer appropriate to talk about its beauty? Is it possible to protect the beauty of landscape if we do not dare to talk about it? Would we want our landscapes to be divested of beauty? What kind of nature conservation is possible if our emotional experiences as human beings are not accepted in the conservation discourse?

Personal thoughts and questions such as these are at the back of this PhD project. Of course they are not actual research questions to which clear-cut answers will be given on the following pages, but they have nevertheless given rise to other sets of questions this thesis addresses.

¹ ‘Landslag er aldrei asnalegt. Landslag er bara eins og það er og þannig ættu mennirnir að horfa inn á við. Menn eru ósáttir og finnst að sumar gnípur eigi ekki að vera til inni í þeim, að sumir hólar eigi að vera stærri.’

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- Paper I Performing expertise: Landscape, governmentality and conservation planning in Iceland (2010). Co-authored with Karl Benediktsson. Published in *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 12(1), 1–22.
- Paper II Landscape in the Sagas of Icelanders: The concepts of *land* and *landsleg* (2012). Published in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 66(4), 177–192.
- Paper III Landscape as conversation (2010). Published in K. Benediktsson & K. A. Lund (Eds.), *Conversations With Landscape* (pp. 45–58). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Paper IV Lay landscapes: Exploring the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept using Husserlian phenomenology. Submitted for review.

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PART ONE

OVERVIEW – CONTEXT – DISCUSSION

1 Introduction

Landslag is an old and established word in Icelandic, which corresponds to the English word *landscape*. As a concept it has had an important role to play in nature conservation in the country since its first general law was enacted in 1956. Within the discourse of nature conservation in Iceland, the concept has been subjected to changes on account of developments of the conservation rationale. A new meaning of *landslag* has emerged on the basis of and at the side of its older meaning. Conceptual confusion has subsequently complicated the use of *landslag* in the context of nature conservation.

1.1 Scope and aims of the thesis

This thesis aims to provide an understanding of this conceptual confusion for the benefit of nature conservation in Iceland. Through interlinked studies based on qualitative research, it explores the place of *landslag* in nature conservation. For this purpose, the thesis examines the *landslag* concept on its own merits on the one hand, and within the legal discourse of nature conservation on the other. It thus seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the lay meaning of the *landslag* concept in the present and what are its historical foundations?
- Is the Icelandic concept *landslag* related to the English concept *landscape*?
- Is the *landslag* concept descriptive of beauty in nature?
- How has reasoning and legislation concerned with nature conservation evolved in Iceland, and how has the conservation discourse been legitimated through time?
- How has the *landslag* concept been integrated into nature conservation and what is its main value in this context?

The focus is on a chapter in the history of conservation in Iceland, when scientific reasoning became dominant in the selection of nature conservation areas, while other more subjective rationalities, that previously had been prominent in conservation thinking and practice, were simultaneously called into question. This was accompanied by methodological amendments that called for both explicitness and objectivity, which proved to be a challenge in the case of *landslag*. As a result of these developments, the hitherto taken-for-granted concept of *landslag* was opened up to debate. A legal definition was called for, in order to make its implementation in conservation and planning successful in the context of scientific rationalities.

The period under discussion may technically be said to have begun in March 1999, when the Act on Nature Conservation no. 44/1999 was signed into law, and ended in April 2013, with a new Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013 that was passed by Alþingi (the

Icelandic Parliament). The beginning marks the launch of the methodological developments mentioned above, whereas the end marks the adoption of a legal definition of *landslag* in nature conservation. The thesis looks in detail at some issues arising out of this setting. On the one hand, it critically examines and describes practices in conservation planning, and the meaning and role of *landslag* in that context. On the other hand, it addresses questions that stem from this examination, relating to the conceptualisation of *landslag* and the development of nature conservation. The thesis thus particularly highlights the *landslag* concept as a linguistic expression that is produced in a cultural context. It explores its meanings and critically discusses its legal definitions; it sheds light on the increased awareness of the need for the protection of landscapes in Iceland; and analyses the tension resulting from cultural encounters between the concepts of *landslag* and *landscape*.

The remainder of this introduction serves to explain my take on the topic. Thus, the next section clarifies the distinction made here between the English word *landscape* and the Icelandic word *landslag*, and explains the use of the latter throughout the thesis. This is followed by a more personal account of how this distinction came about. This introduction then closes with an outline of the structure of the thesis, and description of its constituent parts.

1.2 Landscape or *landslag*?

The thesis is grounded in Husserl's early phenomenology of meaning (Husserl, 1970), in which the role of language is highlighted for expressing perceptual and cognitive knowledge. Hence, *landslag* here is seen primarily as a word; a word that is charged with meaning. The meaning of the word has reference to an object, even a series of objects. As such, *landslag* is also a concept. As a linguistic expression, *landslag* is furthermore culturally embedded; it is a word which Icelanders have used to frame and represent a particular knowledge of their world.

In Icelandic dictionary, *landslag* is defined as the “total appearance of an area of land, the form of nature in particular place” (Árnason, 2007, *landslag*). The word is most often accompanied by qualifying adjectives that describe aesthetic appreciation or experience, such as: “beautiful, scenic, impressive, magnificent, effective, spectacular, majestic, expressive, grand, tremendous, unimpressive, monotonous, bland, insignificant”² (Jónsson, 1994, *landslag*). Importantly, the word *landslag* is a mass noun. It lacks a plural form, as it denotes something that cannot be counted (cf. Þórhallsdóttir, Árnason, Bárðarson, & Pálsdóttir, 2010).

Hence, a distinction is made here between the concepts of *landscape* and *landslag*, even if Icelandic-English or English-Icelandic dictionaries would translate one with the other. On the one hand, this distinction is grounded in language and the cultural connotations embedded in each of the two words, regarded as linguistic cultural expressions. On the

² ‘Fallett, fagurt, tilkomumikið, mikilfenglegt, áhrifamikið, stórbrotið, tignarlegt, svipmikið, stórgert, hrikalegt, tilkomulítið, tilbreytingalaust, sviplítið, lítilfjörlegt.’

other hand, the distinction takes notice of the difference between expert and lay uses of the landscape concept. Such a distinction must acknowledge the plethora of meanings that landscape, as a theoretical concept, has in the vocabulary of various disciplines, and even within a single discipline such as geography (Jones, 2006). To complicate the matter further, geography, or any other discipline for that matter, is not practiced in a theoretical void, but within and across linguistic communities in which various culturally embedded perspectives and interpretations are brought to the table. Still, the dominance of the English language in theoretical practices and discourses cannot be overlooked.

Anglophone geographers benefit from a long history of landscape studies, albeit studies where the language per se often appears to be taken for granted. However, as noted by Short et al. (2001, 10), “languages are not just reflectors of the external world – they embody it.” Theoretical explorations of landscape therefore reflect culturally embedded connotations of the concept, even though these are not under investigation. After all, science is a social activity through and through, and in more than one way. The majority of contributors to a wide range of geographical journals comes from English speaking countries (Short et al., 2001). Since the latter half of the 20th century, the trend in non-English speaking countries has been to adopt English in geographical publications (Harris, 2001). Unquestionably, the role of the English language in bringing geographers together is important, and obviously this applies to a range of other disciplines and practices as well. Nevertheless, this cultural globalisation and dominance of English as the language of science arguably risks the cultural homogenisation of geographical knowledge, and may also lead to a gap between local knowledge and theory. Therefore, with the distinction made between *landscape* and *landslag*, I want as well to call attention to the disregard of the cultural meaning of ‘landscape concepts’ in widely different linguistic and cultural contexts. The English word *landscape* is used in theoretical discussions, not only in English speaking countries but across linguistic communities worldwide, including Iceland. Conversely, *landslag* is and has been a word used by the common Icelandic people.

1.3 In retrospect

As the author of this thesis, I must acknowledge that the distinction between *landscape* and *landslag* stressed above is the result of my own contemplation, following my attempt at the outset of my PhD project to investigate *landslag* in terms of *landscape*, albeit unwittingly. This is revealed, for example, in the first paper published as part of this thesis (see Paper I) where I and my co-author use the word *landscape* throughout the text, although the paper discusses and builds on a study of *landslag*. It did not occur to me until afterwards – after completing the study and after submitting the paper for publication – that I had been taking the meaning of the *landslag* concept somewhat for granted, assuming that the English word *landscape* could be used without any complications as a substitute for the Icelandic one. In daily speech and different circles this may work out fine, but when investigating the very meaning of *landslag* such an approach is problematic.

“One cannot fully appreciate one’s own culture unless one can also see it through the lens of another culture”, Harris (2001) has argued. Indeed, the conceptual difference between

landscape and *landslag* started to come clear to me in a doctoral course titled “Landscape: Politics and Aesthetics”³ that took place in Sweden and Norway. During the course I had the opportunity to meet Scandinavian colleagues in landscape studies. Seven days of intense discussions *in situ* about the various ‘landscapes’ of Sweden and Norway opened my eyes, literally, to the cultural differences. Not so much of the landscapes we visited, although they were certainly different, but of the different ways we, as representatives of different Nordic cultures, conceptualised landscape.

After a while this notion actually came as a relief to me, for as I discuss elsewhere in the thesis (see Paper III) the inconsistency between my own understanding of *landslag* and the various texts of landscape studies that have been influential in geography was somewhat of a hindrance in the beginning of my PhD project. My feeling had somewhat come to be that in order to conduct a study of landscape in Iceland, I would need to put aside my cultural understanding of the meaning of landscape, i.e. *landslag*, and adopt instead theoretical knowledge and perspective. All the same, I felt that by doing so I would be sidelining the core of the concept, and a departure from what had originally motivated my interest. Therefore eventually, the notion of cultural differences in conceptualising landscape led me to realise that I had let the generalisability of academic discourse blur my view of the particularities of my own culture.

This insight encouraged me to thoroughly investigate the Icelandic landscape concept on its own merits. Of course it prompted a change in my PhD project as well, which had originally been laid out somewhat differently. The idea had been to compare three conservation projects in Iceland to understand the place of landscape in nature conservation in Iceland. Backed up by the insight of the cultural differences discussed above, I firmly believed that such comparison could not be drawn without a profound understanding of the meaning of *landslag*. Prior to my studies the concept of *landslag* had not been subjected to scholarly research. Hence, in a way I embarked on a new field of study, which not only was new to me but was also a novelty in Icelandic landscape studies. This entailed also a sort of freedom to mark a new path, accompanied by all the excitement of new discoveries.

Despite this change of course in the PhD project, the objective has mostly remained the same. The difference is that instead of aiming to understand the place of landscape in nature conservation in Iceland, the aim became to understand the place of *landslag* in nature conservation in Iceland.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts, which are not two sequential units but stand side by side and complement each other. Together they constitute the whole of the thesis. This composition is explained by the decision made in the beginning of the PhD project, to base the thesis on research articles, instead of writing up its studies into a monograph.

³ This course was held by the Nordic Landscape Research Network in 2008.

In Part One, Chapter 1 provides a general introduction by presenting the aims and scope of the thesis together with research questions. It also gives an overview of the PhD project. Chapter 2 describes the integration of the landscape concept into cultural geography and discusses previous work in Icelandic landscape studies. Chapter 3 offers a description of the research underpinning the thesis. It sums up the main theoretical perspective, the methodologies adopted and methods employed. In addition, it accounts for the individual papers presented in Part Two, and explains their internal relations. Chapter 4 and 5 provide a historical context for the thesis: Chapter 4 presents an analysis of legal documents and aims to shed light on the enactment of general legislation in nature conservation in Iceland, and its development to the present day. The chapter focuses particularly on the conservation rationale integral to the legislative discourse. Chapter 5 builds on the same analysis as the previous chapter, but brings the focus on the *landslag* concept and its articulation in the legislative discourse. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the major findings of the thesis as a whole, in relation to the meanings, definitions and value of the *landslag* concept.

Part Two, conversely, is a collection of four original papers that build on three empirical studies. Each of the three studies was written and prepared to be published as a refereed research article. Two of them have already been published separately in international peer-reviewed journals (Paper I and Paper II) and one has been submitted when this is written (Paper IV). Additionally, two of the abovementioned studies motivated a theoretical argumentation that was written in the format of a book chapter, which has already been published (Paper III). Each of the four papers delves into an isolated issue related to the concept of *landslag* and/or its integration into nature conservation. The papers thus offer a deeper insight into selected aspects, which contribute to a more holistic understanding of the place of *landslag* in nature conservation.

More precisely, Paper I examines in details the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland, during which an attempt was made to integrate the concept of *landslag* methodically into nature conservation. Paper II investigates the origins of the *landslag* concept and explores its meaning in some of the earliest mentions of the word, which are found in the sagas of Icelanders. Paper III uses the two previously mentioned studies to theorise some ontological aspects of the *landslag* concept. Paper IV, explores the meaning of the *landslag* concept among the Icelandic public in the present, and compares this to the latest definition of *landslag* in legal documents. These papers are all introduced more thoroughly in Section 3.5.

Following the two parts are three appendices. Appendix A is a list of paper and poster presentations carried out during the PhD project. Appendix B is a conference paper written in Icelandic as part of the PhD project. It delves into the role of *epoché* in phenomenological research and uses the third study as an example. Appendix C is a short paper written in Icelandic and published online at the *Vísindavefur* (the Icelandic Web of Science). It aims to give a concise answer to the question: What is the meaning of the concept of *landslag*?

2 The landscape concept in cultural geography and Icelandic landscape studies

This dissertation sits at an intersection of a broader field of cultural geography and studies of landscape. In this chapter I examine briefly how the landscape concept has been integrated into geographical thought, particularly with reference to cultural geography. The discussion serves to contextualise the theoretical approach and contribution of the thesis. Subsequently I review the main contributions to Icelandic landscape studies.

2.1 *Landschaft*, landscape, and cultural geography

It was German geographers who started exploring the intricacies of landscape – or rather, *Landschaft*. The word was introduced into geographical writing already in the 18th century (Hartshorne, 1939), mainly through the works of Alexander von Humboldt. It was used in different meanings, in accordance with German common speech: It could mean either “the appearance of land as we perceive it, or simply a restricted piece of land” (Hartshorne, 1939, 326). Humboldt himself used the word in different contexts, although primarily to describe an aesthetic character of an area. This is evident in his famous work *Cosmos*⁴:

It may seem a rash attempt to endeavor to separate, into its different elements, the magic power exercised upon our minds by the physical world, since the character of the landscape, and of every imposing scene in nature, depends so materially upon the mutual relation of the ideas and sentiments simultaneously excited in the mind of the observer. (Humboldt, 1866, vol. I, 27)

Antrop (2006) has argued that an idea of holism is discernible in Humboldt’s work, which is reflected in his use of the word *Landschaft*; notably in the way he drew attention to human and cultural features of the landscape as well as emphasising its aesthetic quality. Minca (2007) has argued that Humboldt’s use of the word was strategic: precisely because of its double meaning, it was meant to provide the nascent European bourgeoisie with a new spatial theory.

German geographers in fact sought to define the very discipline in terms of the *Landschaft* concept. The territorial meaning of *Landschaft* became predominant in geographical writings in the late 19th century and in the early 20th century geography was generally

⁴ ‘*Kosmos : Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*’

accepted to be a form of 'chorology', i.e. a science concerned with the study of areas and their differences, not only in Germany but in other countries as well (Hartshorne, 1939).

In the English language the word *landscape* dates back to the early 1600s. As with the German *Landschaft*, landscape in common speech had a double meaning, albeit somewhat different: It could mean either 'a picture representing a landscape scenery, as distinguished from a sea picture, etc.' or 'a view or prospect of natural inland scenery, such as can be taken in at a glance from one point of view: a piece of country scenery' (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989: landscape). Landscape was adopted as a technical term in Anglophone geography in the early 20th century. Predominantly this was through the works of the American geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer. In his 1925 essay: *The Morphology of Landscape*, Sauer defined landscape as "an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural" (Sauer, 1996, 300). Sauer recognised the aesthetic qualities of landscape but believed these to lie beyond scientific reasoning and methods. Geographical studies were not to be concerned with "energy, customs, or beliefs of man but with man's record upon the landscape" (Sauer 1996, 309). Sauer was under the influence of German geography, and the meaning of 'landscape' in his works closely resembled the meaning of *Landschaft*, as used by German geographers at the time (Hartshorne, 1939), i.e. as a territorially bounded area. This may be explained by his German ancestry and his studying in Germany as a child (Parsons, 2009). In the *Morphology of Landscape*, Sauer distinguished between natural and cultural landscapes, the latter being the subject-matter of geography:

The cultural landscape is fashioned out of a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result. (Sauer, 1996, 309-310)

John Wylie (2007) points out that Sauer's work became influential not only because of the landscape approach it offered, but also because for Sauer, the study of landscape was equivalent to geography; landscape was what geographers should study. Relating to this, Mathewson (2009) has also pointed out that with the *Morphology of Landscape*, Sauer attacked the environmental determinism which had prevailed in geographical thought.

In 1939 American geographer Richard Hartshorne published his *Nature of Geography*, which was a critical survey of geography as a discipline. The work was partly targeted at Sauer and his 'Berkeley school' through its criticism on the landscape concept (Mathewson, 2009). Hartshorne (1939) argued that *Landschaft*, had been introduced far too uncritically into American geography. The double meaning of the concept in German speech either as the appearance of land, or a restricted piece of land, had been the cause of much confusion, he argued, not only in relation to the meaning of landscape in geographical work, but also in relation to geographical thought in general. Part of the problem was that the use of the concept was inconsistent between different authors, as well as within the writings of the same author. This disadvantage, however, could possibly be overcome with a sound definition of the concept in every single work, although this could still be a cause of confusion among readers of different works. Another aspect of the conceptual confusion, however, was that the territorial meaning of the German *Landschaft*, simply did not resonate with the English language:

Consequently we should regard as one of the blessings of our language that common speech clearly recognizes that while “landscape” has something to do with an area of land, it is not the same as an area. No etymological demonstration of the presence of the same ambiguity in Old English would justify our re-introducing it into the scientific form of a language in which common speech has established a clear separation. On the contrary, to destroy the relative clarity of common English usage merely to follow the lead of German geographers who have not our advantage, would be little short of a scientific crime. (Hartshorne, 1939, 327)

Hartshorne reckoned that the meaning of landscape, as used by Sauer and the Berkeley school was nothing more than a synonym with *region*. In his opinion, other meanings of landscape were of little importance in geography: Geographers were neither concerned with landscape as a view of an area, nor did they need a concept based on a ‘psychic sensation of area’, since this was not their field of study. If geographers, then, were not concerned with landscape, in the meaning of its common English usage, then (American) geography should abandon the word *landscape* as a technical term, rather than transferring it any further into scientific terminology. In this work, Hartshorne subsequently argued for the concept of *region* as a core concept for geography (Hartshorne, 1939). Hartshorne’s criticism was widely heard and became very influential within the discipline. Sauer and the Berkeley school, however, kept their course but were somewhat isolated in American geography which developed in different direction (Mathewson, 2009).

Sauer’s influence is discernible in historical geography that developed in Britain, although he himself showed little interest in the concept of time (Williams, 1983). The British historical geographer Henry Clifford Darby, who sought to unite the disciplines of geography and history, was somewhat influenced by Sauer and turned cultural landscape into a topic of research. Darby argued, however, that the visible landscape of the present could only to a limited extent explain its appearance. To ask what had given landscape its present character revealed the commitment of historical geography (Darby, 1953). In 1952 Darby published the first volume of his *Domesday Geography of England*, in which he explored landscape change in England by re-constructing its geographies in the 11th century, as they were described in the so-called *Domesday Book*, preserved in a manuscript from the 11th century. In somewhat similar vein, the material landscape was also the topic of research for the British historian William George Hoskins, who in 1955 published his book *The Making of the English Landscape*. The concept of landscape, hence, was important in works of historical geography in England.

2.2 New perspectives in cultural landscape geography

In American geography, after the Hartshorne critique in 1939, studies of landscape were no longer central within the discipline. According to Olwig (2003b), one of the most prominent geographers to keep focus on landscape in geography was David Lowenthal. This was not least for the fact that Lowenthal had studied at Berkeley with Sauer and later moved to Madison and worked with Hartshorne. Through his work, Lowenthal managed to bridge the two opponents by showing that landscape as a thing-in-it-self was uninteresting.

However, the meaning of the concept, which had caused Hartshorne to reject it, was precisely of interest because it held information about “the way environment is perceived and comprehended as landscape by individuals and societies, and the consequences that this has for behaviour toward that environment” (Olwig, 2003b, 873). This opened up a new field of landscape geographies.

With the rise of humanistic geography in the 1970s, studies of landscape started to blossom again. The humanistic approach rejected the use of quantitative methods that had been dominant in geography during the 1950s and 1960s and adopted instead more qualitative methods to study the perceived environment. With the humanistic approach the discipline took influence from phenomenology and existentialism. In this vein Chinese/American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argued that landscape combines an objective and subjective view of the environment, and appears through the effort of imagination (Tuan, 1979). Another American geographer, Donald W. Meinig argued that “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads” (Meinig, 1979, 34). Hence, we do not see the same landscape, although we may be looking at the same environment, for our values of things in the environment are different. Olwig (2003b) has argued that this approach to landscape opened the door to important theoretical contributions of English geographers.

The ‘new cultural geography’, labelled so to distinguish it from and yet to recognise the American roots, emerged in the 1980s especially in Britain, with the merging of humanist cultural geography and Marxist social geography (Cosgrove & Jackson, 1987). A leading figure in the new cultural geographies was the English geographer Denis E. Cosgrove, who in 1984 published the book *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. Contrary to previous landscape studies he did not focus on the materiality of the landscape but on the ‘idea of landscape’. In this book he famously defined landscape as a ‘way of seeing’, implying that landscape’s material appearance, whether it was the physical landscape, landscape paintings, or cartographic maps, was not a neutral image of land but a representation reflective of human imagination, values and power. Cosgrove build his theory on studies of Renaissance Italy, where the linear perspective plaid an important role in developing a certain way of seeing that became influential in the ‘West’ and was thus constitutive of landscape’s meaning.

Wylie identifies three approaches in cultural geographical writing for exploring landscape as a way of seeing: Landscape as veil, landscape as text, landscape as gaze. All three approaches emphasise that landscape is a visual image of cultural meanings, and as such a representation. This calls for methodologies of interpretation, rather than description, contrary to the earlier cultural geography. Social constructionism became a dominant theoretical perspective, which implied that all knowledge, meanings and representations were seen as cultural and social productions (Wylie 2007).

In the early 1990s the new cultural geography exploded in different directions, drawing on various theories and perspectives, such as feminism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, for exploring and theorising issues of space and power relations, as well as the diverse cultural practices of everyday life (Scott, 2004). The works of French philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida were consulted for theorising landscape.

The convergence of interest between the new cultural geographers and the historical geographers also opened up a series of new topics for research, as described by Muir (1998): 'landscape as heritage', 'the perception of landscape', 'landscape, politics and power', 'landscape evaluation', 'symbolic landscapes', 'aesthetic approach', and 'landscape and place relationships'. By the turn of the 20th century landscape had again become one of the central concepts in human geography.

The history of the landscape concept in cultural geography is both cultural and geographical. German, American and British geographers have been leading in the development of theorising landscape. The storyline I have presented above, however, is selective in two important ways. First, only few geographers have been mentioned, but certainly there were many more that influenced the development of geographical thought in terms of landscape, which was presented above. Second, studies and theorisation of landscape in cultural geography have not been limited to the three nations outlined above. Geographers in other countries have certainly made landscape a subject of research, whether in the early days of landscape geography, or in the recent past. A full description of cultural geographies and studies of landscape, however, remains out of the scope of this thesis. My selectiveness has served the purpose of contextualising my thesis with reference to the field of landscape studies in cultural geography. This is the topic of the next section.

2.3 Placing the thesis in landscape geography

The four papers in Part Two relate to a greater or lesser extent to the storyline presented above, either through actual engagement in some of its works, or others which have come in its wake. An overview of the theoretical engagement of the four papers is presented here. Each of the four papers presents and discusses in more details the theories it builds on.

Paper I picks up different strands of thought that came with and in the wake of the new cultural geographies. In the late 1990s English geographer Nigel Thrift was a leading advocate of what was to be called 'non-representational theory' (Thrift, 2000). As the label suggests advocates of this stand were critical of the representations theorised by the new cultural geographers which "drained the life out of things they studied" as interpreted by Wylie (2007, 163). 'Non-representational theory' has also been referred to as 'the performative turn', for geographers advocating this line of thought partly drew upon theories of performativity (e.g. Butler, 1993). This was to open up the door for performance theories more generally, and stimulated a variety of studies among human geographers (e.g. Clark, 2003; Cloke & Perkins, 2005; Crouch, 2003; H. Lorimer & Lund, 2003). Foucauldian influences have also been inspirational in geographical writings about landscape (e.g. Matless, 1998). In the paper we bring together the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and perspectives from performance studies, for theorising the performance of the expert. This theoretical perspective is then used to analyse the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland.

Cosgrove's studies of the idea of landscape prompted reaction from geographer Kenneth R. Olwig, who subsequently presented a study with which he aimed to recover the 'substantive' nature of landscape (Olwig, 1996). This entailed etymological explorations of the landscape concept. Both studies offered much to an understanding of the landscape

concept, and prompted a variety of landscape studies, not least in Norway, where Olwig resided at the time. The result of this was an elaboration of a ‘Nordic’ landscape concept (Olwig, 2003a). In Paper II I discuss the theoretical input of these two scholars and their differences. I also point to the limitations of the ‘Nordic’ landscape concept, for it fails to recognise the Icelandic landscape concept *landslag*. Building on perspectives from Cosgrove and Olwig I consequently explore the origins of the Icelandic landscape concept and its meaning in the Middle Ages. On basis of these explorations I point out that there may be more to the landscape concept and its meaning than hitherto revealed.

In the 1980s the French sociologist Bruno Latour published his book *We have never been modern*, in which he critically explores the dualist way of thinking which has characterised modernity and is presented in conceptualisations such as *nature* vs. *culture*, *subject* vs. *object*, and so on. This work was to underpin actor-network theory (ANT), which Latour himself described as a “theory of the space or fluids circulating in a non-modern situation” (Latour 1999a: 22). ANT was one form of the social construction theories (Demeritt, 2002) that came with the new cultural geographies. It became influential in geographical theorisations (see Bosco, 2006). In Paper III I build on ANT and phenomenological perspectives from Maurice Merleau-Ponty to theorise landscape as relational space in a world of perception, and use the Icelandic landscape concept as an example.

In the wake of the new cultural geographies, one strand of landscape studies in Britain developed in terms of phenomenology. This was particularly prompted by anthropologist Tim Ingold’s essay *The Temporality of the Landscape*. Ingold was critical of the definition of landscape as a ‘way of seeing’ which he saw as producing a fundamental distinction between subject and object, culture and nature, by theorising it as a symbolic representation (for further discussion see Wylie 2007). Instead, Ingold defined landscape as “the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them” (Ingold, 1993b, 156). With this essay Ingold got the attention of cultural geographers who were already adopting perspectives of relational ontology. Ingold’s essay therefore opened up the door for perspectives from phenomenology, particularly from the works of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which were consequently used for further theorisations of landscape. A prominent geographer in this direction has been John Wylie (20002, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2012). In Paper IV I discuss Wylie’s work. Arguing that cultural geographers need to take notice of the cultural diversity embedded in different languages in their conceptual explorations of landscape, I consequently offer a new approach to phenomenological studies of landscape, based on perspectives from phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1970, 1983) and methodological perspective offered by psychologist Clark Moustakas (1994).

Since the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (Council of Europe, 2000a) came into force, it has been of interest among different geographers, as witnessed by numerous articles in the journal *Landscape Research* and elsewhere. To mark the geographical interest is also the book *the European Landscape Convention: Challenges of Participation* edited by geographers Michael Jones and Marie Stenseke and published in 2011. In this work they discuss the meaning integral to the definition of landscape that is offered in the Convention, and compare this with previous conceptualisations of landscape. They take special notice of public participation, which is integral to the ELC definition of landscape, through the words: ‘landscape means an area, as perceived by people’, and discuss this

with regard to the implementation of the Convention. The book further contains a number of chapters that either deal with the implementation of public participation in relation to the Convention, or participatory methods and practices. Iceland signed the ELC only recently, in 2012, and its implementation has yet to be carried out in practice. It has nevertheless prompted a definition of the Icelandic landscape concept and changes to the legislation. This I discuss in Chapter 6 and reflect on to what extent the principles of the ELC have been followed in this case. In Paper IV I also reflect upon the relevance and value of adopting an international definition of landscape in Icelandic legislation, with regard to cultural value and diversity.

Through the empirical studies presented in Part Two, the thesis thus engages with different perspectives which have been prominent in the last few years in cultural landscape geography. At the same time it presents some novelty by combining different perspectives in a way that has not been done before, as well as introducing new theories to the field of landscape studies. Simultaneously, the thesis aims to claim place for the Icelandic landscape concept in the field of cultural geography and studies of landscape more generally.

2.4 Landscape studies in Iceland

The academic study of landscape is a nascent field in Iceland, dating back only to the beginning of the 21st century. Certainly, Icelandic landscapes have been of interest in different fields of engagement, for instance in the visual arts, particularly landscape painting (see e.g. Kvaran, 2011), literature (see e.g. Guðmundsson, 1996) and landscape architecture (see e.g. Félag íslenskra landslagsarkitekta, n.d.). Icelandic landscapes have also been the subject of description by previous Icelandic scholars (see e.g. Thoroddsen, 1908, 1911), and numerous other less scholarly descriptions. But as the 20th century came to an end Icelandic landscapes increasingly became problematised as ‘landscape’; as a subject in itself, in scholarly research.

Some older landscape studies do exist, however. The most noteworthy is *The Landscapes of Iceland: Types and Regions*; a book written by geographer Hubertus Preusser and published in the Netherlands in 1976, and previously submitted as a doctoral thesis to the University of Saarland, Germany, in 1972. This work presents the first overarching classification of landscape in Iceland, where landscape is understood as a comprehensive unit of both natural and cultural features. Preusser first identified eight different ‘landscape types’ (plus islands). This classification was to a large extent based on land-forms and surface configuration. On the basis of this classification, he further identified 26 ‘landscape regions’, plus 4 regions of islands, each of which corresponded to a demarcated unit of the geosphere; a particular area in the country. This second classification was based on a notion of cultural activities as well. Although Preusser was not an Icelandic scholar and published abroad, his work got some attention in Iceland at the time (see Þórarinnsson, 1977).

The recent emergence of landscape studies in Iceland is reflective of a larger trend, as discussed in the previous section. It also coincides with increasing interest in landscape conservation and planning, both in Iceland and Europe at large (see Chapter 5). Many of

the studies described below have indeed been prompted by the transformations of landscapes that have accompanied the large-scale hydropower and geothermal energy projects undertaken in Iceland in recent years. These studies have been conducted within and across different disciplines, such as anthropology, biology, geography and philosophy.

Geographer Karl Benediktsson (2007), in a paper entitled "*Scenophobia*" *geography and the aesthetic politics of landscape*, critically examines some of the recent theoretical explorations within critical geography, particularly those related to social constructionism and the 'socialisation' of nature. While Benediktsson acknowledges the value of their reasoning and the deconstruction of the nature-culture dualism they present, he simultaneously questions their implications for nature politics, for such theorisation seems to overlook or even deliberately sideline some meaningful human values. The aesthetic beauty of landscape is a case in point, he argues. Importantly intrinsic to the human experience of nature, the 'scenic' has tactically been undermined by contemporary critics in the field of geography, as well as from the natural sciences. Benediktsson therefore argues for landscape geographies that dare to take aesthetic values in nature seriously, on the basis of which sound nature politics could be established.

In 2010 the book *Conversations With Landscape* was published, edited by Benediktsson and anthropologist Katrín Anna Lund (Benediktsson & Lund, 2010). The book aims to explore issues of landscape through the metaphor of *conversation*. In the introduction the editors define their understanding of landscape so:

Landscape implies a more-than human materiality; a constellation of natural forms that are independent of humans, yet part and parcel of the processes by which human beings make their living and understand their own placing in their world. (Lund & Benediktsson, 2010, 1)

The editors further explain how the conversation metaphor can serve not only to overcome the dualism between human and non-humans and to discuss in various ways relations between landscapes and living beings, but also to prompt a new understanding of landscapes. The book is a collection of original contribution from eighteen different scholars from various disciplines: archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, geography, literature, and visual arts. Their common aim was to investigate human-landscape/nature relations and personal affect. Most of these writings related to landscape in Iceland, and were composed by both Icelandic and non-Icelandic scholars.

In his contribution to the *Conversations* book, Benediktsson (2010) makes links between landscape studies and the field of biosemiotics. He uses the metaphor of conversation for adding a more-than-human dimension to landscape studies, by introducing the landscape as a medium in which conversations between animals and humans take place.

In her contribution to the *Conversations* book, co-authored with Margaret Willson, Lund discusses how landscape becomes embodied with emotions through the act of walking (Lund & Willson, 2010) (see also Lund, 2010). In other writings Lund has reflected on walking in landscape as a process of becoming (Lund, 2012). Together with geographer Anna Dóra Sæþórsdóttir, Lund has also studied the human-nature relations constituted in landscape when running in wilderness (Lund & Sæþórsdóttir, 2008).

Another of the contributors to the *Conversations* book is philosopher Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir (2010). In her writing she examines how environmental ethics and phenomenology within contemporary philosophy can contribute to landscape research. For this purpose she introduces Merleau-Ponty's idea of the *flesh* and Böhme's idea of the *atmosphere*, which she argues may offer a holistic understanding of the landscape experience. Jóhannesdóttir problematises the objectivity-subjectivity dualism inherent in landscape assessment, arguing that it contributes to the weak status of landscape in conservation. She therefore argues for an approach that builds neither on the objective nor the subjective side of landscape, but on their interweaving, and thinks that the European Landscape Convention offers an approach in that direction for future landscape assessment. Jóhannesdóttir has further written about how phenomenology can contribute to landscape research, and the experience of wonder (Jóhannesdóttir, 2011).

In some other publications, the connections between landscape and tourism have been explored (Huijbens & Benediktsson, 2013; Olafsdóttir, 2007, 2011)

In a quite different corner in the field of landscape studies we find biologist Þóra Ellen Þórhallsdóttir and environmental scholar Þorvarður Árnason. Together they have led a research project aimed at developing a method for classifying landscape in Iceland, on the basis of which the diversity and rarity of landscape types could be evaluated. This was intended to contribute to an assessment of the conservation value of various landscape types. The results were published in 2011 (Þórhallsdóttir et al., 2010) and presented a classification of landscapes in Iceland into eleven types. The new method consisted of statistical analysis based on visual variables alone. This research project was conducted as part of a larger undertaking initiated by the Icelandic government, which was to develop a Master Plan for hydro- and geothermal energy resources in Iceland (Björnsson, Steingrímsson, Ragnarsson, & Adalsteinsson, 2012). Work on the Master Plan started in 1999 and ended in 2010. It was conducted in two phases. The project described above belonged to the second. Landscape, however, was also a subject of investigation in the first phase, where an attempt was made to evaluate and rank predefined areas in terms of different criteria (Þórhallsdóttir, 2007a, 2007b; Verkefnisstjórn um gerð rammaáætlunar um nýtingu vatnsafls og jarðvarma, 2003; see also Þórhallsdóttir, 2002).

As these examples show, two very different strands have been prominent in Icelandic landscape studies. One consists of several published works influenced by critical perspectives from the social sciences, humanities and arts. In these writings, much emphasis is put on the experience of the subject and its potential to offer a holistic understanding of landscape. The other sees the landscape as an object of nature that can be approached with methods of the natural sciences. The theorising presented in the studies of the former strand, suggests a critical attitude towards the methodology adopted in the latter. As Jóhannesdóttir (2010, 121) argues: "We cannot understand the meaning and value of landscape by focusing only on its objective side or its subjective side".

While the two strands thus differ fundamentally, both ontologically and epistemologically, they are both stimulated by similar interests in conserving nature and landscapes in Iceland and have therefore a very political and practical purpose. It is therefore of great importance that the two find a way to *converse* with each other. Arguably the latter may need to take better notice of the human subject (see also discussion in Section 6.2). As for the former

strand, its strength lies in theorising, but it may need to demonstrate more explicitly how to bridge the subject-object dualism in practice.

However, the fact that the very important project of classifying landscapes in Iceland, was conducted in terms of the Master Plan for hydro- and geothermal energy resources in Iceland – that advances in nature conservation are being made, by largely accepting the terms of utilitarianism beforehand – is worth serious consideration, although this will not be pursued further here.

This thesis aligns itself to some degree with the former strand; indeed one of its papers (Paper III) was published in the *Conversations* book (Waage, 2010). It is also stimulated by concern for nature in Iceland and emphasises the aesthetic value of the country's landscapes, as in the works of Benediktsson (2007) and Jóhannesdóttir (2010). This thesis, however, differs in that it theorises the Icelandic landscape concept itself, *landslag*, as a cultural expression and concept with a value on its own.

3 The research: Structure, theoretical perspectives and methodologies

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (Creswell, 2007, 15)

This thesis consists of several interlinked studies, all of which are based on qualitative research. The aim of this chapter is to clarify the perhaps somewhat complicated composition of the thesis and to give a coherent account of the theoretical and methodological approach of the research underpinning the work.

In order to bring about a holistic understanding of the place of *landslag* in nature conservation, the research is divided into four separate empirical studies (figure 1). They draw upon different methodologies and make use of various methods of inquiry. Three of the four studies have been prepared to be published as refereed research articles. These are presented as Papers I, II, and IV in Part Two. Two of these studies furthermore gave rise to a theoretical argumentation, published as a book chapter. This is presented in Paper III. One of the four studies, conversely, has not been prepared to be published separately. The results of this study are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 in Part One.

The next section presents the theoretical perspective of the thesis, as philosophical stance that lies behind the choice of some of the methodologies, and as general perspective of the thesis. Following this are two sections that apply to the empirical studies listed above: Section 3.2 introduces the methodologies adopted, whereas Section 3.3 discusses the data used for analysis. Section 3.4 has a broader reference to the whole of the thesis as it discusses some ethical concerns in relation to doing research and writing. Finally, Section 3.5 sums up the papers presented in Part Two and contextualises the research process.

3.1 Theoretical perspective

A plethora of different theories and ideas have come my way during this research, many of which have informed the methodologies adopted in the empirical studies. These are accounted for in the respective papers. In this section I want to acknowledge the influence of two thinkers, who above all others have inspired my work and moulded my general perspective, and furthermore informed some of the methodologies adopted. These are the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault and the German philosopher and phenomenologist Edmund Husserl.

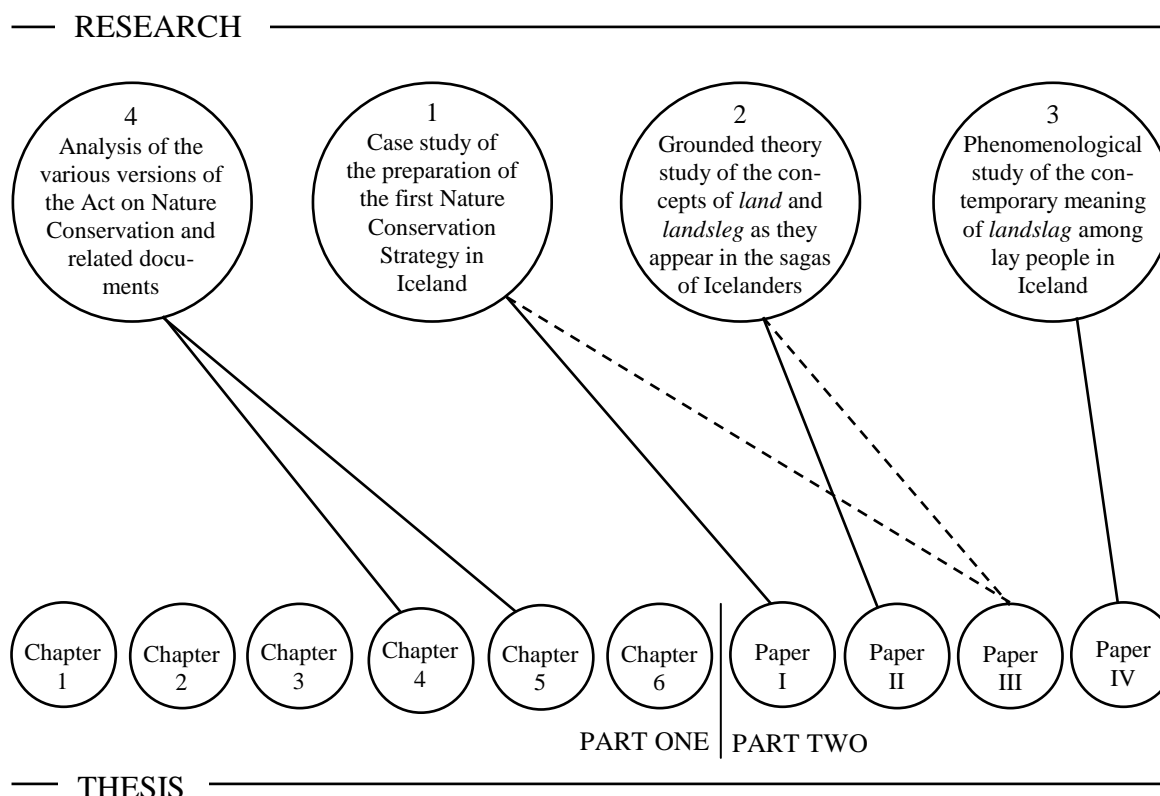


Figure 1 The four empirical studies of the research, numbered in order of their sequence in the research process. The lines indicate the relations between the studies and the thesis' chapters (in Part One), and papers (in Part Two).

“There is no ‘Foucault system’. One cannot be a ‘Foucauldian’ in the way one can be a Marxist or Freudian”, Alan Sheridan (1980, 225) has argued. Sheridan then added: “If Foucault is to have an ‘influence’ it will no doubt be as a slayer of dragons, a breaker of systems”. Indeed, Foucault’s influence on the PhD project as a whole cannot be pinned down to a one specific tool that represents a rigid analytical framework to be followed. His influence rather comes in the guise of inspiration to my thought through reading his works and the works of others whom he has inspired.

Particularly relevant in this regard is the notion of *genealogy*, which Foucault elaborated as a form of research. In a lecture given in 1976, Foucault stated:

Let us give the term genealogy to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today. (Foucault, 1980b, 83)

Hence, genealogical research is used to disseminate ‘subjugated’ knowledge, i.e. knowledge which previously has been disqualified as being “beneath a required level of cognition or scientificity” (Foucault, 1980b, 82), and has therefore been rejected by other mainstream knowledge that has been prioritised. *Genealogy* completes another form of research Foucault labelled as *archaeology*, which serves the purpose of unearthing and analysing the subjugated knowledges (O’Farrell, 2005). Genealogical research thus partly focuses on events and discourses in the past, but at the same time it is firmly embedded in

the present, as it aims “to account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc.” (Foucault, 1980a, 117) It is “the history of the present” (Foucault, 1977, 31).

Central to genealogical research is a focus on power relations, as constitutive of discourses of ‘truth’. Discourse hence represents power (Foucault, 1981) while truth is constructed by knowledge, which always however implies a particular perspective (Foucault, 1984). Knowledge therefore does not represent some absolute truth, but is the result of a selective scientific inquiry. In other words, knowledge is “what a group of people get together and decide is true” (Fillingham, 1993, 6). Apart from seeing truth as the product of scientific statements, Foucault sees truth to be linked with power in a circular relation which he terms as ‘the régime of truth’ (figure 2). Hence, the production of truth only becomes possible through power, and power is exercised through a certain discourse of truth. Furthermore, ‘the régime of truth’ implements ‘rules of right’, which in turn delimit the power relations (Foucault, 1980b). In genealogical research the aim is to understand struggles in the present, and with such knowledge produced, react to the situation.

I like to think of the PhD project in these terms; it describes my general perspective. Foucault’s influence is furthermore discernible in this thesis where the focus is on particular conflicts between knowledge that is accepted and regarded as superior in the discourse, and subjugated knowledge, which is less accepted. For example, one of the studies (Paper I) examines the development of a new method for identifying and selecting conservation areas, revealing conflict between the two institutions that were responsible for the project. This conflict could to a great extent be explained by notions of ‘scientificity’, i.e. what counts as a scientific method and who is most reliable for scientific performances. Conflict also appears between different meanings of the *landslag* concept in the Icelandic conservation discourse. The analytical discussion provided in Chapter 4 and 5, about the enactment of the general legislation in conservation and the place of *landslag* within the legislative discourse, reveals how a new meaning of *landslag* emerges as the former meaning is found unsuitable for scientific rationalities. Also there is focus on the conflict between the Icelandic concept *landslag* and the English concept *landscape*. This conflict takes place only in Iceland, where the prevailing discourse has accepted the dominance of English as the language of science. The meaning of the *landslag* concept has consequently to a great extent been overlooked, although most probably unintentionally. These conflicts and the discourses they relate to may not represent terrifying dragons that need to be slayed, or disturbing systems that need to be broken down (cf. Sheridan, 1980). Nevertheless they represent certain silences or a sidelining, I argue, and by exposing key dimensions of these conflicts I simultaneously call for reaction.

The mention of conflict between the Icelandic concept *landslag* and the English concept *landscape* brings this discussion to Edmund Husserl and his influence on the general perspective of this thesis and choice of methodologies. His early explorations of the relationship between expression and meaning provide an understanding of concepts adopted in the thesis. As such, Husserl’s work has complemented Foucault’s influence described above, by guiding my approach to dealing with the conceptual conflicts addressed in the thesis.

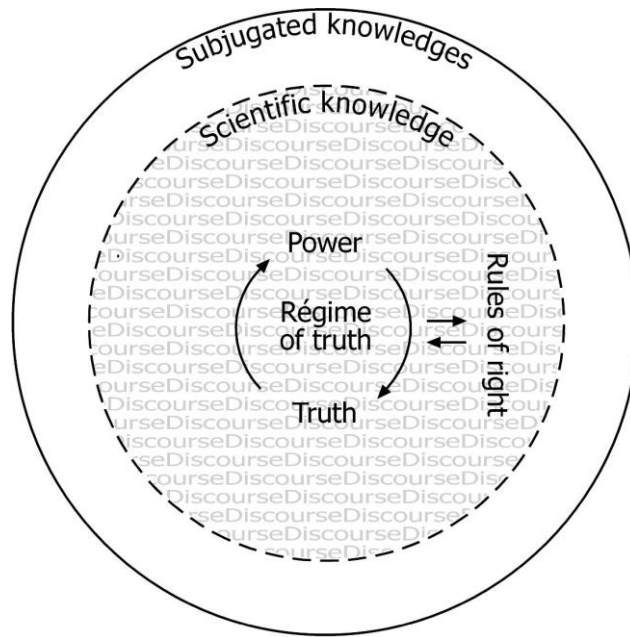


Figure 2 My understanding of the relations between the discourses of truth and power/knowledge in Foucault's writings.

In 1900 and 1901 Husserl published his *Logical Investigations*⁵; a work on which basis he further elaborated his phenomenology in the following years. In this work Husserl emphasised the importance of language as the principal instrument of thought, and noted that all theoretical research terminate in statements of verbal expressions (Husserl, 1970). He then set out to examine the relationship between expression and meaning. Meanings, he argued become real in mental life through expressions, although they can exist in themselves. Expressions can be of diverse kind. A very obvious one, and relevant to this discussion, is a *verbal* expression, such as a word. An expression denotes both its physical appearance i.e. the word as such, whether it is verbally articulated or written down on paper, and its meaning. Of note is that the two are not the same. This becomes evident by the obvious fact that one word can have two different meanings. One single meaning can also be expressed by two different words; words that are synonymous. Husserl pointed out that in addition to such understanding, an expression refers not only to a particular meaning, but at the same time it names an object to which it also has a reference. Hence, just as a word and its meaning represent two different aspects of an expression, so are meaning and object separable. For explaining this line of thought Husserl used the example of 'the equilateral triangle' and 'the equiangular triangle': Two different meanings are expressed, and yet they refer to one and the same object. (Husserl's work is discussed in more details in Paper IV.)

Such a line of thought offers an understanding of the concept of *landslag* as comprised by three different units: The word *landslag*, the meaning of *landslag*, and the physical reality to which *landslag* refers. Consequently a profound comparison of different dimensions becomes possible, between the Icelandic concept *landslag* and the English concept

⁵ 'Logische Untersuchungen'

landscape. Clearly these are two different words, but do they share the same meaning, and do they have reference to the same kind of objects? Paper 2 addresses such and similar questions. Likewise, this framework was useful when analysing the meaning of the *landslag* concept as articulated in legal documents (see Chapter 5). Most importantly then, with this insight from Husserl's work, I felt empowered to study the concept of *landslag* in its own terms, as a distinct cultural product (Paper IV), and to turn it into the central topic of the thesis instead of *landscape* (see also discussion in Section 1.2 and 1.3).

3.2 Methodologies

Qualitative research is not a homogenous approach but implies different methodological traditions of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). The empirical studies of the research draw upon the methodologies of grounded theory, discourse analysis, phenomenology, and textual analysis. Each of the three empirically based papers (Paper I, II, and IV) describes the methodology/ies employed within the respective study. Following is a general description.

3.2.1 Grounded theory

The main emphasis of grounded theory methodology is on analysis of the data. However, the analysis is *nota bene* not carried out during a separate phase in the research process, but feeds into different steps of the study, such as the data collection / production and writing. Grounded theory thus offers guidelines relevant to the complete research process. The main analytical tools of grounded theory are 'open coding', 'axial coding', and 'selective coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Open coding implies a classification of the data into a set of categories that describe the issue being studied. The categories are generated in terms of the issue, but are not borrowed from an analytical framework irrelevant to the data itself. The process leads to the gradual discovery of a set of concepts that represent the respective categories. The researcher then explores the dimensions of each of these concepts by examining their appearances within the other categories as well. Axial coding implies an exploration of the major concepts and their relations to other concepts and categories. It connotes as well an identification of subcategories and a clarification of the internal relations between all concepts and categories. Selective coding, then, is used to refine the theory by integrating the different categories, and organizing the categories around a central explanatory concept.

3.2.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology as a research methodology in social sciences is based upon phenomenology as a philosophical method. There is variety of phenomenological research methodologies, which partly may be explained by the variety within the phenomenological movement, of which most prominent are the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The phenomenological research methodology applied in this research is based upon Husserl's work (Husserl, 1983). More precisely a research model is adopted that was developed by Clark Moustakas (1994).

Characteristic for phenomenological research is the emphasis on a phenomenon, understood as the “essential correlation between *appearance and that which appears*” (Husserl, 1964, 24). Hence, the central focus of phenomenological research is on human experience as uniting the subject and the object. A research methodology that builds upon the works of Husserl is furthermore characterised by the conscious practice of the *epoché* (*ἐποχή*), a method Husserl developed with the aim of systematically putting aside and excluding all knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation, during the analysis. Paper IV thoroughly discusses Husserl’s phenomenology and how it feeds into Moustakas’ phenomenological research model.

3.2.3 Discourse analysis

The term discourse analysis is used to represent a variety of methods for scrutinising discourse, but is not a singular method for analysing data (Gill, 2000). Common to all these methods is the underlying premise that discourse is socially constructed. This implies that instead of seeing discourse as a true description of real circumstances, it is seen as a representation of the reality it describes. In these terms the discourse itself becomes the subject of analysis. A broad definition of discourse, hence, includes verbal expressions, but also world beliefs, perspectives, and practices.

‘Foucauldian discourse analysis’ is a particular analytical perspective that draws upon the ideas of Michel Foucault about discourse, truth, and power (Foucault, 1981) (see Section 3.1). Discourse implies knowledge that is presented as truth. Simultaneously discourse implies power, for what counts as truth in a particular time and place is contingent upon power relations within the respective society. This form of discourse analysis; a power/knowledge analysis, thus focuses particularly on the control of discourse; how truth is attributed to a particular argument, why, and by whom (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). The objective of Foucauldian discourse analysis is hence to understand the prevailing discourse in society, how it is legitimated, and what it accomplishes. This includes a search for statements that shape the discourse and determine what is permitted and what is not.

3.2.4 Textual analysis

In its most general terms textual analysis is used to imply various methods and methodologies that are used to scrutinise text. It implies methodologies used both in qualitative and quantitative research (see Silverman, 2001). In qualitative research there is furthermore some variety, but what unites the qualitative methodologies is their search for an understanding of a text’s meaning.

Paul Ricoeur explains the relation between discourse and text in the way that text is a fixation of discourse (Ricoeur, 1971). For Ricoeur, discourse is always about something, and simultaneously it has the character of a fleeting event. With reference to such conceptualisation of discourse, text is a paradigm of meaningful discourse (see Standen, 2013). And just as ‘discourse’ has come to mean much more than verbal communication, implying practices also, so Ricoeur seeks to expand ‘text’ to apply to meaningful action that has been fixed (Ricoeur, 1971). This understanding of text is adopted here.

Textual analysis in these terms draws upon hermeneutics. Hermeneutics originally referred to guidelines, theories and technique used for the exegesis of scripture, but has come to stand for a general theory of textual interpretation and search for understanding (Crotty, 2003). Modern hermeneutics, hence, seek to understand the meaning of a text. Still it is recognised that the meaning carved out is always an interpretation, and that interpretation furthermore entails highlighting. This is because there is always distance between the author of the text, the text itself, and the interpreter, physical of course, but can also be cultural and temporal. Text, however, is seen to acquire autonomy once it is written, and can thus be turned into an object of investigation. Simultaneously, however, text is regarded as means of transmitting meaning between cultures and societies. Text therefore is also a link between its author and its interpreter (Crotty, 2003). Hermeneutic inquiry seeks to uncover meanings that are hidden in the text, and thus to gain an understanding of the text that goes even further, or is deeper than that of its author. This is seen to be possible as much is taken for granted in the writing of a text (Crotty, 2003).

Integral to hermeneutic inquiry is the hermeneutic circle. A notion of the hermeneutic circle implies that an understanding of the whole is acquired through an understanding of its parts, and simultaneously that an understanding of the parts it acquired through an understanding of the whole. This technique can be adopted methodically in different ways. For example it may turn the focus to be set on the historical, social, and cultural context in which text is created, but also interpreted. It may also imply attentiveness to details that may shed light on the bigger picture (Crotty, 2003).

The insight from hermeneutics has been adopted to inform textual analysis of diverse kind (e.g. Geanellos, 2000; Prasad, 2002). In this research it informs the textual analysis of the Act on Nature Conservation and related documents (Chapter 4 and 5), which however did not follow a systematic procedure. Rather it consisted in careful and repeated reading of these texts, with special attention to the issues mentioned above.

3.3 Data

Qualitative research can be based on data of diverse kind, such as ethnographic observations, interviews, texts, naturally occurring talk, and visual images (Silverman, 2001). Data used for qualitative research thus either exists prior to the research and as such is independent of it, or is generated for the purpose of the research. In the case of this research, both categories apply. The research was based on the following kinds of data:

- *Legal documents*; the various versions of the Act on Nature Conservation and related documents (Chapter 4 and 5).
- *Institutional reports*, which relate to the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland (Paper I).
- *Literary texts*; the sagas of Icelanders (Paper II).
- *Qualitative interviews*. First, with experts in nature conservation that worked on the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy (Paper I). Second, with lay people in Iceland for examining their understanding of the word *landslag* (Paper IV).

Each of the papers and chapters accounts for the respective data in more details. Additionally, over the last eight years I have attended various seminars and public meetings where representatives from the nature conservation authorities have given talks about various issues related to nature conservation. These talks, both implicitly and explicitly, reflected their views and perspectives. Although my observations of these meetings are not dealt with as actual data in the thesis, they have certainly opened my eyes to various dimensions of the prevailing conservation rationale in Iceland. Undoubtedly then, such insight has partially informed my analytical perspective, for example with reference to the legal documents.

The general methodological attributes of the qualitative interview, are particularly addressed in Papers I and IV. Also described there are the methods used for conducting an interview and preparing the interview as data to work with. In both studies I generally followed Steinar Kvale's (1996) guidelines. In its most basic terms, this implies that the interviews were semi-structured, in the sense that I, as the researcher, provided a frame for discussion, whereas the interviewee each time was given the freedom to identify important aspects of the topic under discussion. The interviewee was also given the freedom to discuss these aspects in terms he/she found appropriate and important. The different choice of methodologies in each of the two studies, however, also contributed to the interviewing process: In the case of the study with the experts in conservation (Paper I), the analysis was based on methods of grounded theory (see Section 3.2.1). As previously noted, grounded theory methodology calls for the analysis beginning already in the data collection process. Thus, a theme I identified in one interview I could bring to the next interview to explore its relevance within the data. In the case of the study with the lay people (Paper IV), this was not so. The methodology adopted in this study was based on phenomenology (see Section 3.2.2). As explained already, this required me, as a researcher, to consciously put aside all my knowledge of the topic under discussion. Hence, themes identified in one interview could not be brought to the next one. This study further called for an innovative approach and refinement of the interviewing technique, which are discussed in Paper IV.

3.4 Ethics

The human focal point of qualitative methodology has increasingly motivated the scrutiny of ethical concerns, and ethics are now commonly accepted as a vital component of qualitative research. In fact, ethics, as intellectual reflection at least, concern science in general, as science always relates to people in one way or another (Proctor, 1998). The ethical turn in qualitative research has been induced by different factors, such as increasing interest in practicing interpretative social science (Cloke, Cooke, Cursons, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000), and among geographers an interest in values, which dates back several decades, can be seen as a clear antecedent (Proctor, 1999). Concern about ethics is manifested for example with the notion of *reflexivity*, which involves continuous analysis of the researcher's self and the ways he/she affects the study (Cloke et al., 2000; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Herman & Mattingly, 1999). This has for example led to the notion that data is co-produced by the researcher and the researched, rather than being collected by the researcher (Thrift, 2003b; Whatmore, 2003), and that such co-production "cannot be assumed to represent collaboration of equals" (Cloke et al., 2004:164). The researcher

therefore, rather than being a “western shaman” (Thrift, 2003b: 106) who gets what *he* needs from *his* informants and works out what is *really* going on, has become an ethical agent who faces all sorts of problems and dilemmas as he/she strives to involve members of a certain community in the production of a particular representation of reality and knowledge.

Being an Icelandic, it may certainly be reasoned that I am part of the community under investigation in parts of this thesis, for example in the study where I investigated the meaning of *landslag* among the lay people. Stating that the *landslag* concept has a culturally embedded meaning, which members of the Icelandic society adopt through their upbringing and participation in the community over the years, implies that I have adopted this meaning as well, unwittingly, prior to my studies. This has its advantages as well as disadvantages. As I have already explained (Section 1.3, see also Paper III), this partly prompted my understanding of the distinctiveness of the Icelandic landscape concept among others, which I would consider one of the advantages then for this thesis. However, at the same time this raises the question how and whether I, as a researcher, can separate my unconscious knowledge from the knowledge I intend to produce, i.e. to make sure my personal perspective does not interfere with the results. The answer is the practice of reflexivity mentioned above; the conscious reflection about the connection between myself and the topic under investigation. Acknowledging these relations empowers me to separate between the two when needed, I argue, while disregarding or hiding such connections would rather result in the opposite. At least it would not encourage the researcher to make such a distinction. In the phenomenological study, the Husserlian *epoché*, discussed briefly above, serves exactly this purpose (see also Paper IV).

Reflexivity has also affected my way of writing. Since reflexivity implies that the idea of an objective researcher is rejected, I decided to write in first person. Hence, the use of ‘I’ here should not be confounded with partiality or lack of meticulousness. On the contrary, it is meant to underline my ethical concerns described above. During the PhD project I have consciously attempted to separate my self from the topic of my studies, while at the same time I acknowledge the relation and the presence of my self. I trust that the papers reveal analytical rigour, notwithstanding the ‘I’.

3.5 Summary of papers

The four papers that are presented in Part Two are the outcome of three of the empirical studies (see figure 1). Each of the four papers explores specific issues that serve to inform the place of *landslag* in nature conservation. The following summary contains a discussion about the studies in order to contextualise their sequential relation and role within the research.

3.5.1 Paper I

Performing Expertise: Landscape, governmentality and conservation planning in Iceland

This paper has previously been published as a research article in the *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* (Waage & Benediktsson, 2010). It is co-authored with Karl Benediktsson, who is also the advisor of the PhD project. His contribution to the paper was in the form of mutual reflection and discussions about the results of the study, and collaborative writing.

The paper presents the results of the first study of the research, a case study, the aim of which was to critically examine the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland, and investigate the role of *landslag* in that context. The preparation of the Strategy included the development of a new method for selecting conservation areas, which turned out to be strongly influenced by the concept of biodiversity. The selection of conservation areas was expected to be based on different objects of the natural environment, one of which was *landslag*. Hence, the paper seeks to answer the question: ‘Can landscape be turned into a useful tool for conservation through methodologies designed for the systematic protection of biodiversity?’ The analysis drew upon discourse analysis and grounded theory, and was based on interviews conducted with the experts involved in the preparatory process, as well as documents relating to the Strategy. For addressing the research question, the analysis concentrated on the one hand on the development of the new methodology. On the other hand, the analysis focused on *landslag* and how it was integrated into the new methodology. This also called for a conceptual analysis based on the experts’ discourse revealed in the interviews.

The results of the study describe the power/knowledge relations constructing the conservation performances of the experts, but also the experts’ conceptualisation of *landslag* that turned out to be somewhat contradictory. The study furthermore revealed several complications regarding the inclusion of *landslag* in the methodology of biodiversity conservation. In the study, it is argued that the two were both ontologically and epistemologically incompatible. This represented a certain dilemma to the experts. The results, however, also revealed how they tried to solve this dilemma by adjusting the *landslag* concept so as to meet the criteria of natural science methods.

While the results of the study thus gave an answer to its research question, at the same time they prompted other sets of questions that I felt compelled to seek answers to. These questions concerned *landslag* and how it was conceptualised. This gave rise to the second study of the PhD project.

3.5.2 Paper II

Landscape in the Sagas of Icelanders: The concepts of *land* and *landsleg*

This paper has previously been published as a research article in *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography* (Waage, 2012).

The paper presents the results of the second study of the research, the aim of which was to explore the deep-rooted meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept and to investigate its origins. This study engaged with conceptual explorations of the English concept of landscape within cultural geography and consequently probed the relation between *landslag* and *landscape*. This gave rise to the following research questions: What kind of land is being referred to in the term *landslag*? What kind of human-land relationship does the *landslag* concept describe? To what extent does the concept depend on societal features and landownership? Does the aesthetic appreciation of land that appears to be embedded in the Icelandic landscape concept stem from influence of the English landscape concept, and can this be fully explained by artistic development in the wake of Renaissance and Romanticism?

My initial investigation of the earliest uses of the word *landslag* took me back to the 14th century, to one of the sagas of Icelanders. Consequently the sagas of Icelanders as a whole became the data to work with in this study.

The analysis was threefold and was principally based on grounded theory methodology. First, a conceptual analysis of the word *land*, as used in the sagas, was conducted. All compound words that use *land* as their first component were then identified and categorised in accordance with the preceding analysis of *land*. All mentions of the word *landsleg* (the archaic spelling of *landslag*) were then scrutinised thoroughly.

The study revealed that the *landslag* concept was in use in the 14th and the 15th century in Iceland, and that it most probably emerged in Iceland some time during the Commonwealth Period (930–1262). It was shown that in the 14th and 15th century the concept described a human-land relationship that is grounded in surface features of the land, whose morphology is visually perceived, and is often associated with aesthetic appreciation. Its medieval conceptualisation was shown to correspond to the lexical definition of the modern meaning of *landslag*. The study thus concluded by pointing out that the Icelandic landscape concept does not share the same history as the English landscape concept. These two concepts originated at different times and in different societies.

3.5.3 Paper III

Landscape as Conversation

After completing these two studies I was invited to write a chapter in the *Conversations* book (Benediktsson & Lund, 2010) (see Section 2.4). I used the opportunity to contextualise some of my thoughts on the *landslag* concept that emanated from my previous studies, and to delve into some of its ontological aspects. The ensuing argumentation was the essay *Landscape as Conversation* (Waage, 2010), which is the third paper of this thesis.

In this paper I theorised landscape as a relational space, constituted by humans and nature, and brought to existence by way of human perception. For my argumentation I relied on relational ontology and phenomenology to argue that “*landslag* is the name given to an aesthetic relation between humans and inanimate nature; a relation that is brought to existence by way of ocular perception of the world, and that centres upon nature’s morphological quality” (Waage, 2010, 56).

At this moment in my studies, I had reached the point where I argued that *landslag* as a concept has its own history and a culturally embedded meaning that is not necessarily or entirely equivalent to other landscape concepts, particularly the English one. I had also come to the conclusion that the meaning of *landslag* has to be carefully considered when it comes to protecting Icelandic landscapes, if the results are to be successful and in line with ideas about the nature of *landslag*. My previous studies, however, suffered from certain limitations. The conceptual analysis of the first study was based on interviews with people who had prepared the first Nature Conservation Strategy, i.e. a narrow group of experts in nature conservation, who could hardly be said to represent the general public. The second study, with its primary purpose as a conceptual analysis, was based upon texts written 700 years ago. It therefore first and foremost described the meaning of the concept at the time, but not in the present, although the similarities and link between the past and the present were pointed out. My third study, presented in Paper IV, took these limitations into account.

3.5.4 Paper IV

Lay landscapes: Exploring the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept using Husserlian phenomenology

This paper has been submitted for review by the time this is written. It presents the results of the third empirical study of the research. The aim of the study was ‘to explore how lay people in Iceland perceive and describe their experiences of what they define as *landslag*’.

With this study, the phenomenological exploration of the *landslag* concept initiated in the third paper was considerably deepened and the definition of the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* expanded. The paper concludes by discussing its results in relation to the legal definition of *landslag*, adopted with the latest version of the Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013. The paper argues for consideration of the culturally embedded meaning of the *landslag* concept when setting out to protect Icelandic landscapes, not only for the sake of the land under discussion and our perception of it, but also for the sake of Icelandic culture embodied in the language.

After completing this study I felt that I had come to the point of saturation in my research; that I now knew the answers to many of the questions which arose after the completion of the first study; questions which step by step have moulded the procedure of the PhD project and served to fill up gaps where knowledge was found wanting. The PhD project has thus to a certain extent followed its own trajectory, as often is the case with qualitative research.

Having finished writing the four papers, and about to start writing Part One, I felt that coherence would be lost on the reader unless the legal context that gave rise to the PhD project as a whole was presented in detail. This is done in the next two chapters, which present an extended analysis of the Act on Nature Conservation and related documents. The majority of these texts were certainly not unfamiliar to me prior to this study. On the contrary, I have consulted some of these throughout the research. However, my understanding of these texts had developed considerably during the research, as my understanding of other parts of the research developed. This analysis therefore finalises the research.

4 The Act on Nature Conservation 1956–2013

This chapter and the next present the results of an analysis of the Act on Nature Conservation and related documents, from the enactment of its first version in 1956, to its latest version passed in Alþingi in 2013. The analysis is based on the following documents: a) the various versions of the Act on Nature Conservation, b) the Explanatory Reports accompanying the bills drafted for each version of the Act, c) other bills drafted for revising or amending the Act on Nature Conservation, although not passed in Alþingi, and d) other published and non-published material from institutions of the nature conservation authorities. These documents are regarded as texts, understood as a paradigm of discourse, and thus representations of the legal nature conservation discourse in Iceland. The analysis draws upon the methodologies of Foucauldian discourse analysis as described in Section 3.2.3, and textual analysis, as described in Section 3.2.4.

The objective of the two chapters is twofold. First it provides historical context for the thesis main arguments, as they offer some basic information about the general legislation in nature conservation in Iceland and the institutional environment. This is needed for contextualising the place of *landslag* in nature conservation. Importantly, the two chapters furthermore offer an understanding of the nature conservation rationale embedded in the nature conservation discourse, and the place of *landslag* there within. The present chapter focuses on the former; the conservation rationale and its development that is embedded in the legislative discourse, as far as it relates to the general law of nature conservation. Simultaneously the chapter builds up a discursive framework for the analysis that follows in Chapter 5, which narrows the focus to the *landslag* concept.

For the purpose, this chapter discusses the enactment of the general law in nature conservation, and its legislative context. It examines the premises for protection on which basis nature conservation in Iceland is established, and the categories for protection. Based on these the chapter describes the conservation rationale prevailing in the early years of the general law. The chapter then proceeds to introduce new strands in the conservation rationale and follows these through the conservation discourse by highlighting some chosen examples of its manifestation. It concludes by introducing some of the amendments made in the latest version of the Act on Nature Conservation⁶.

⁶ Information provided here about the Nature Conservation Act is limited to the scope of the thesis. Hence, the description of the Act does not encompass all topics addressed in the Act, but only those that are considered relevant to shed light on the place of *landslag* in nature conservation.

4.1 Prelude

The definition of ‘nature conservation’ may vary, but in the broadest of terms it arguably refers to all means to protect the natural environment and wildlife for the future, particularly from unwanted human impact. Different emphases, however, have characterised the conservation movement. Scientific knowledge, together with economic and ethical concerns, has provided the basis for conservation laws and policies of various kinds worldwide (see Gillespie, 1997). Nature conservation may thus be defined differently with regard to which premises and objectives are considered to be valid at a particular time and place, i.e. the ‘truth’ about nature conservation implied with each definition, inevitably reflects a particular perspective (cf. Foucault, 1984).

In Iceland, measures have been taken since early days of settlement to restrict from certain behaviour in order to secure the continuing use of natural resources. For example, the hunting of geese and ducks was prohibited in certain areas already in the Commonwealth period (930–1262), in order to protect the harvesting of down and eggs (see G. Karlsson, Sveinsson, & Árnason, 2001), which were valuable resources for livelihood at the time. Based on economic premises, where economy is understood as management of resources, this early instance of bird protection has generally not been mentioned by those who have written about the history of nature conservation in Iceland (see E. Einarsson, 1967; Guttormsson, 1974; Línadal, 1984; Þórarinnsson, 1950). While such measures arguably are consistent with the ideology of ‘sustainable development’, which increasingly has been integrated into the conservation rationale of the present, Icelandic conservation history has instead been presented in terms of a different set of ideas which developed from the early 20th century and which were crystallised in legislation in the 1950s.

4.2 The enactment of the general law

In 1956, Alþingi passed the Act on Nature Conservation no. 48/1956 (figure 3). Being the first general law on the conservation of nature, the Act unquestionably was a watershed in Icelandic conservation history. Nature conservation was not a novelty at this time, but existing legislation in this field mostly concerned specific areas and species. Noteworthy is for example the protection of birds, which had developed over quite a long period of time. As mentioned above, the protection of certain bird species can be traced back to early settlement. The first general law on bird protection, however, was passed in 1882 (Lög um friðun fugla og hreindýra no. 6/1882), while the legislation in place when the first Act on Nature Conservation was passed dated back to 1954 (Lög um fuglaveiðar og fuglafriðun no. 63/1954). Areal protection had also begun to develop by the time the general legislation was enacted; in 1928 with the protection of Þingvellir National Park (Lög um friðun Þingvalla no. 59/1928), which will be discussed shortly, and in 1940 with protection of the island Eldey as a nature reserve (Lög um friðun Eldeyjar no. 27/1940). Also related to conservation is afforestation and land reclamation, about which the first general law was passed in 1907 (Lög um skógrækt og varnir gegn uppgræðslu lands no. 54/1907). By the time the Nature Conservation Act was passed these issues were dealt with separately, land

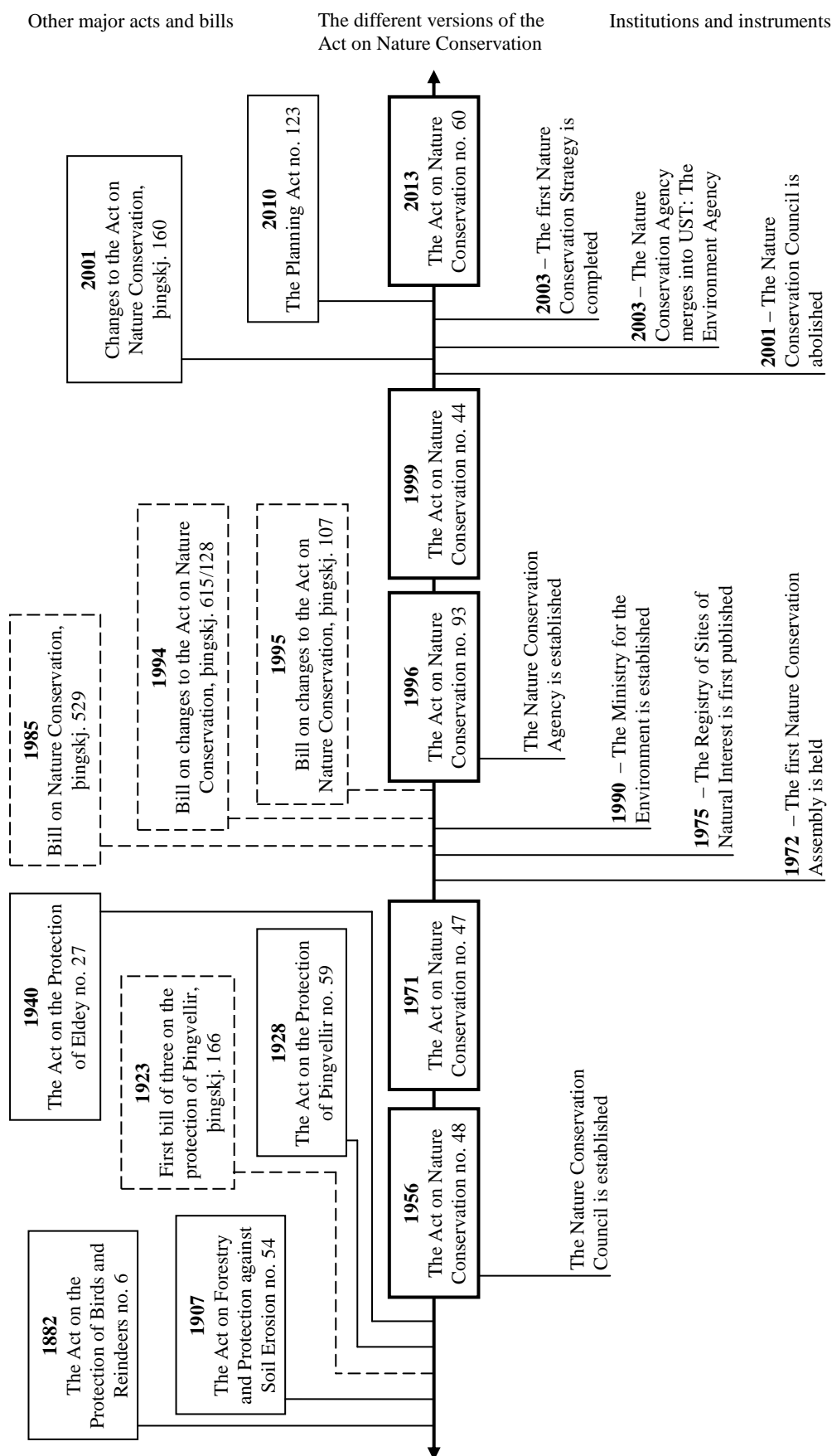


Figure 3 Timeline showing the various versions of the Act on Nature Conservation. Major bills discussed in the thesis are indicated, as well as chosen acts that serve to describe the legal context of the Act. Institutions in nature conservations and major instruments for conserving nature are also shown.

reclamation with an act that dated back to 1941 (Lög um sandgræðslu og heftun sandfoks no. 18/1941), and forestry with a recent Act (Lög um skógrækt no. 3/1955). Provisions of these acts, however, did not have reference to the general legislation in nature conservation (for further discussion about the history of forestry, soil conservation and land reclamation, see Bjarnason, 1974; Crofts, 2011; Olgeirsson, 2007).

In contrast to previous legislation, the 1956 Act on Nature Conservation adopted a comprehensive approach, which gave conservationists the tools and the platform to take actions for the protection of areas and species that still had not been singled out for conservation. This was surely its greatest achievement. From its original enactment, a revised version of the Act has replaced the existing version four times in all; in 1971, 1996, 1999 and 2013⁷ (figure 3). In a way it is correct to say that the Act in place at any given time is that which is of most value for understanding the conservation rationale of that time. Accordingly, the value of the 1956 Act should be limited to the period between 1956 and 1971. It must be observed, though, that with the original 1956 Act certain foundations were laid in nature conservation in Iceland, some of which have remained integral to subsequent versions of the Act. The revisions in 1971, 1996 and 1999 served mostly to modify the administration of conservation and to adapt to changes of the institutional environment in the country, as well as to respond to new responsibilities presented by Iceland's signature to various international treaties. Conversely, the premises for protection and the legally defined categories for protection have remained the same, with very few modifications, from 1956 to 2013. Although some changes occurred in conservation provisions, some of which may have affected conservation in practice as will be discussed later, the core rationale that was set out in 1956 was valid until 2013. And even beyond, as the 2013 Act may be said to have expanded the conservation rationale, rather than transformed it. With hindsight it may thus be argued that the 1956 Act and its Explanatory Report has considerable value not only for documenting the conservation rationale of the 1950s, but also for explaining the one of the present.

The 1956 Act was based on a clear definition of nature conservation provided in its Explanatory Report (Þingskjal 232, 1956). Nature conservation in general was said to be based on three different sets of premises: cultural, social and economic. According to this definition,

- 1) Cultural premises include:
 - a. Provisions against the damage of natural features, which are valuable for understanding nature and natural processes.
 - b. Provisions for the preservation of rare species whether of flora, fauna or minerals.
 - c. An acknowledgement of cultural responsibility to avoid damages of nature in relation to constructions.
 - d. An acknowledgement of cultural responsibility to preserve beautiful areas, as well as to promote good conduct in order to prevent the disfiguring of nature.
- 2) Social premises connote provisions for enabling and securing public access to natural areas for the enjoyment of nature.

⁷ By the time this is written the 2013 Act has not yet come into force.

- 3) Economic premises translate into restrictions on the use of natural resources, particularly non-renewable ones, so that these can be harnessed wisely.

(Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956; Þingskjal 232, 1956)

The Report asserted that the provisions for conservation in the Act were principally based on the cultural and the social premises, as it would be difficult to make general provisions on economic grounds. Rather, conservation based on such premises would be best achieved with special laws. In contrast to the 1956 Act, much of the prior legislation on nature conservation had been based on economic premises. Therefore, the new Act replaced previous legislation only to a very limited extent; merely one law, on the protection of the island Eldey (Lög um friðun Eldeyjar no. 27/1940), was subsumed under the new Act, and a few paragraphs from other laws (see Þingskjal 232, 1956).

Nature conservation in Iceland stretches over a long period of time. In a wider perspective the 1956 Act is a milestone in its development. At the same time the Act marks a new beginning in conservation, with its general provisions based on a new set of ideas, while ignoring others. And as such it has arguably played a performative role in the Icelandic conservation discourse.

4.3 Background motivations

The guiding philosophy of the 1956 Act was both to protect nature from humans and to provide access to nature for humans; i.e. to foster a human-nature relationship which would be based on, and cultivate, respect for nature. In the revised version of the Act passed in 1971, this purpose is encapsulated in the first article:

The objective of this act is to direct the interaction of humans with nature so that it neither harms life or land, nor pollutes sea, waters or atmosphere.

The act is intended to ensure, to the extent possible, that Icelandic nature can develop according to its own laws and to ensure the conservation of its exceptional or historical aspects.

The act shall facilitate the nation's access to and knowledge of the country's nature.⁸ (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 47/1971, art. 1, my translation)

This purpose has been integral to the Nature Conservation Act ever since. It remained unaltered as the sole objective in the 1996 revision. With the 1999 revision, the word 'environment' (*umhverfi*) was substituted for 'nature' in the first paragraph. An attempt was also made to integrate the ideology of sustainable development to the conservation rationale at this time. Accordingly, an appendage was added to the last sentence of the purpose: "The Act shall facilitate the nation's access to and knowledge of the country's

⁸ 'Tilgangur þessara laga er að stuðla að samskiptum manns og náttúru, þannig að ekki spillist að óþörfu líf eða land, né mengist sjór, vatn eða andrúmsloft. Lögin eiga að tryggja eftir föngum þróun íslenzkrar náttúru eftir eigin lögmálum, en verndun þess, sem þar er sjaldgæft eða sögulegt. Lögin eiga að auðvelda þjóðinni umgengni við náttúru landsins og auka kynni af henni.'

nature and cultural heritage, and promote protection and utilisation of natural resources on the basis of sustainable development” (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 44/1999, art.1, my translation, italics added). In the last revision of the Act, in 2013, this statement still remains one of the main objectives, although emphasis is now put on the conservation of biological diversity, geological diversity, and the diversity of *landslag* – but more about that later.

The philosophy revealed in the 1956 Act is certainly not unique for Icelandic conservation, but reflects trends in the conservation movement that had been gaining ground in the Western world since the 19th century (Cronon, 1996). This philosophy did not arise all of a sudden in 1956 Iceland. Páll Línadal (1984), who has written an account of the events leading up to the enactment of the law, identified the first clear wording of this line of thought in documents that date back to 1923, when the first bill of three on the protection of Þingvellir was presented to Alþingi (Þingskjal 166, 1923; Friðun Þingvalla, 1923).

The protection of Þingvellir, the first national park⁹ in Iceland, was confirmed by Alþingi in 1928 and came into force in 1930 (Lög um friðun Þingvalla no. 59/1928), but as Línadal recounts, the idea of protecting this area appeared already in 1907 (see Þórðarson, 1907). In the years between 1907 and 1928 this idea took shape, inspired greatly by the North American national parks model rather than conservation initiatives in Northern Europe (Línadal, 1984). The beauty of the area and its historical value was the basis for its protection. This should be possible to enjoy by the whole nation and for generations to come. Concerns about the poor conduct of the growing number of visitors to the area also prompted concerns about Þingvellir, and related to this, the imminent threat posed to the natural environment by a forthcoming festival which was to take place at Þingvellir in 1930 to celebrate the Millennium of Alþingi. Þingvellir was thus the first area to be protected in Iceland on grounds of the cultural and social premises that later were described in the Explanatory Report to the 1956 Act.

According to Línadal (1984), this whole affair very much influenced the conservation rationale in Iceland at the time and consequently prompted the general law. Shortly after the protection of Þingvellir, a bill on “the protection of nature and historical sites” was presented to Alþingi (Þingskjal 689, 1932). This bill was not passed, however, nor was another on the “protection of natural monuments” two years later (Þingskjal 435, 1934). Finally, in the wake of a parliamentary resolution in 1949 (Þingskjal 406, 1949), a bill on nature conservation was introduced in Alþingi in 1954 (Þingskjal 26, 1954). This bill was not passed at first attempt, but it was reintroduced in 1956 (Þingskjal 232, 1956) and passed as the Act on Nature Conservation no. 48/1956. The Act was thus the outcome of a long process, which here has been described only to a limited extent.

Despite its influence, the Act on the Protection of Þingvellir was not subsumed under the new Act on Nature Conservation. Up until 1956, natural and historical values had usually

⁹ The Act on the protection of Þingvellir from 1928 did not refer to Þingvellir as a national park but as ‘a shrine for the whole nation’. However, in discussions leading up to its protection it is repeatedly referred to as a national park, with reference to the North American national parks idea, and ever since it has usually been referred to as a national park, for example in the Explanatory Report to the Act on Nature Conservation from 1956. The designation of Þingvellir as a national park was confirmed in the revision of the Act made in 2004 (Lög um þjóðgarðinn á Þingvöllum no. 47/2004).

been combined in the conservation discourse. The Explanatory Report to the 1956 Act, however, argued that sites of historical value and sites of natural value would be protected for different reasons. Hence, it would be too complicated to address the two matters in one single Act (Þingskjal 232, 1956). The Nature Conservation Act, in theory at least, thus split up the conservation discourse. It was recognised that Þingvellir, on grounds of its natural value, could fit into one of the categories for protection of the new Act, but still it was argued that its protection was first and foremost based on its historical value. For this reason it would be best to leave the management of Þingvellir as it was (Þingskjal 232, 1956). The fact that the protection of Þingvellir was administered by the Prime Minister's Office, while conservation projects stipulated by the new act were administered by the Ministry of Education, also appears to have complicated the matter and confirmed the administrative separation between Þingvellir and other protected areas (see Gíslason, 1971).

Concerns about the management of Þingvellir, for example about the lack of control on the increase in number of holiday cottages (see e.g. Guttormsson, 1971), called for actions to be taken. In 1968 Alþingi passed a resolution that called for the revision of the two Acts (on the Protection of Þingvellir, and on Nature Conservation). A new act should hence be drafted on 'conservation, the protection of Þingvellir and national parks' (Þingskjal 666, 1967-68). As it turned out, however, only the Nature Conservation Act was revised in 1971, and again it was argued that Þingvellir would be best managed with a special Act. And so it remains still today.

4.4 The categories for protection

The 1956 Act describes five categories for protection, each of which meets the dual purpose of the Act in its own way.

- 1) Natural monuments (*náttúruvætti*)
Applies to non-biotic nature formations, such as waterfalls, craters, caves, cliffs etc., as well as places where rare minerals or fossils can be found. Protection can be based on either scientific value and/or aesthetic value. Scientific value here means informative value, which implies that the place is suitable for research and/or education, while aesthetic value denotes that the natural formation is beautiful or unusual (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956, cf. art.1, §a; Þingskjal 232, 1956).
- 2) Protected plant or animal species
Applies to plant or animal species that are in danger of extinction, whether in particular areas or the whole country. The protection is principally based on scientific value (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956, cf. art. 1, § b; Þingskjal 232, 1956).
- 3) Nature reserves (*friðlönd*)
Applies to areas that are exceptional in terms of flora or fauna. The aim is to preserve nature in the area and natural processes, and to restrict access to the area. The protection is principally based on scientific value, although possibly also on historical and cultural value. (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956, cf. art.1, §c; Þingskjal 232, 1956).

- 4) National parks (*þjóðvangar/þjóðgarðar*)
Applies to areas that are exceptional in terms of *landslag*, flora or fauna. The aim is to preserve *landslag* and nature unaltered from human impact, to prevent the destruction of an exceptional *landslag*, as well as to secure public access to the area. The protection is based on scientific value, aesthetic value and social value (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956, cf. art.1, §d; Þingskjal 232, 1956).
- 5) Country parks (*fólkvangar*)
Applies to areas that are protected for the single purpose of securing public access, recreation and enjoyment of nature in the area. The protection is first and foremost based on social value, although it is recognised that aesthetic evaluation may very well influence the choice of each area (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956, cf. art.8; Þingskjal 232, 1956).

These five categories stayed the same for the next 57 years, or until the latest revision of the Act was made in 2013 and the number of categories was increased and modified. For the most part they remained unaltered during this period, with only a few exceptions:

- In the 1971 revision it became possible to designate a ‘nature reserve’ on the grounds of special *landslag* in addition to the flora and fauna mentioned in the original version of the act (Lög um náttúruvernd no.47/1971).
- Furthermore, in the 1971 revision, when designating a ‘natural monument’, it became possible to include the surrounding area in the designation, to the extent necessary for securing the protection of the natural monument.
- In the 1996 revision, the category ‘plant and animal species’ was reformulated as “organisms, their habitats and ecosystems” (Lög um náttúruvernd no.93/1996).
- In the 1999 revision, a distinction was made between “natural monuments on land” and “natural monuments at sea” (Lög um náttúruvernd no.44/1999).

Three of the categories from the 1956 Act were for protected areas; ‘nature reserves’, ‘country parks’, and ‘national parks’. After the 1971 revision the ‘natural monuments’ category could also fall within this group, and after 1996 the former ‘plant and animal species’ as well. Characteristic for the Nature Conservation Act is thus the protection of demarcated areas. Each of the categories meets the objective of the Act in its own way. The designation of a ‘nature reserve’ is principally grounded on some of the cultural premises that are described above, namely to preserve nature and natural processes. This applies also for the protection of plant and animal species. By contrast, the designation of a ‘country park’ is first and foremost meant to reserve an area for public use and is thus grounded on social premises. The designation of ‘natural monuments’ and ‘national parks’ are conversely based on both cultural and social premises, and are thus the only categories of the five that encompass the dual objective of the Act, namely to protect nature both *from* humans and *for* humans. As described above, the national park idea in Iceland stretches back to the early 20th century and its development during the first three decades very much influenced and prompted the general legislation on the conservation of nature. Arguably, the national park category is thus highly significant for the conservation rationale of the mid-20th century, and central to the general legislation on the conservation of nature.

4.5 'Modern' perspectives in nature conservation

During the 1960s environmental awareness gained ground in Iceland, slowly but steadily. Partly this may be explained by attention to conservation projects carried out under the 1956 Act. But no doubt the increased attention to the environment during the 1960s also reflected a larger trend experienced worldwide within the conservation movement; a trend often attributed to Rachel Carson's influential book *Silent Spring*, which indeed was translated into Icelandic and published in 1965. In the late 1960s, perspectives from ecology got the attention of Icelanders, but ecology was presented as the 'economy of life' (see Hallgrímsson, 1970). With the ecological perspective emphasis was placed on the responsibility of humans in keeping equilibrium in nature, by means of careful management of natural resources. It was also argued that scientific research needed to be done in order to avoid destruction of the environment (Bergmann, 1970). This greatly influenced the conservation discourse as time went on.

This growing attentiveness to matters of nature conservation manifested itself for instance with the establishment of the first non-governmental organisations for conservation in 1969. First of these was *Landvernd*, an umbrella organisation that originally focused mainly on conservation of soil and vegetation, and later that same year *SUNN*, an association for nature conservation in North Iceland, was formed. In the years that followed, parallel associations were established around the country (Guttormsson, 1974). Also worth mentioning here is the launch of a new journal in 1970, *Týli*, which was intended to focus on ecology and nature conservation. The journal was published for some 15 years (for further discussion about conservation initiatives in the 1970s, see Hallgrímsson, 2010).

As already mentioned, the Nature Conservation Act was revised in 1971. In the Explanatory Report that accompanied the revision, it was pointed out that perspectives in nature conservation had developed since the original Act was signed into law in 1956, and that this would inevitably call for some changes. Subsequently there was a description of how information from various institutions, organisations, and individuals had been collected, in order to learn about what was labelled as "modern nature conservation" (Þingskjal 617, 1970). It was confirmed, however, that the definition of nature conservation provided in the original version of the Act was still valid, although it was stated that with the 'modern perspective' more emphasis would be put on the social and economic premises. Accordingly, it would be important for conservation management to initiate new projects for this purpose and to give instructions about the sensible use of natural resources. Despite these claims, the revised Act remained essentially similar to the original. Changes to the legislation served mostly to refine the original version, particularly the administrative section of the Act, but were less concerned with its fundamental premises. The revised Act was indeed criticised for not taking economic premises more into account, i.e. the management of natural resources (cf. Section 4.2) as the 'modern perspective' was seen as requiring, as well as for not dealing with pollution (Guttormsson, 1974).

As for the national park category, the authors of the revised Act stressed its importance as the category for protection that best combined the different premises for conserving nature, and considered it therefore the most effective of the legally defined categories. They further

argued that ideally there should be at least one or two national parks in each part of the country (Þingskjal 617, 1970). This confirmed the central position of the national park category. The first national park designated under the Act, Skaftafell National Park, had recently been established at this time, and the second, Jökulsárgljúfur National Park was already in the making.

The talk about ‘modern conservation’ of the late 1960s was highly influenced by the ecological discourse. It stressed the importance of ‘sensible’¹⁰ use of natural resources, but also highlighted the significance of scientific research on nature (see e.g. Guttormsson, 1971). This was a call for a more procedural approach to the conservation of nature; an approach that would make use of scientific knowledge in an on-going national debate about land use, which around this time had assumed great prominence. Ideas about harnessing the glacial rivers for generating hydroelectricity had been present from the early 20th century, but in the late 1960s these ideas began to be materialised on a large scale as the Icelandic government embarked on a course of energy-intensive industrialisation. The construction of dams, reservoirs, and power plants was part and parcel of this agenda. In 1969 the Búrfell Hydropower Station began operating, its energy used mostly in a newly constructed aluminium smelter near Reykjavík. And there were plans for much, much more: In the early 1970s some considered it almost to be a moral duty to harness the glacial rivers as far as technically possible, in order to improve the quality of life for Icelanders. The economic premises of nature conservation, i.e. the management of natural resources, were creatively enlisted as a tool for that purpose (see e.g. J. Björnsson, 1970, 1973). The perspectives of ‘modern conservation’, particularly the growing emphasis put on the sensible use of natural resources, thus opened up the discourse on nature conservation, and arguably served both sides of the debate. In the years that have followed, several reservoirs have been constructed in the central highlands, accompanied by hydropower stations and more heavy industry (for a thorough discussion, see Karlsdóttir, 2010; Magnason, 2006). Unquestionably, the debate about land use in the central highlands has influenced the development of nature conservation efforts in Iceland deeply. As for the call for scientific knowledge being employed for the conservation of nature, it took years, however, before it brought changes to the legislation. But that does not mean that this call was not heard or listened to.

4.6 Scientific reasoning enters the setting

One of the stipulations of the 1956 Act was the establishment of a Nature Conservation Council (*Náttúruverndarráð*), whose responsibility was to carry out the various provisions of the Act, together with the Nature Conservation Committees (*Náttúruverndarnefndir*), also established on this occasion in each region of the country. The administration, however, was in the hands of the Ministry of Education at this time. The Council began

¹⁰ It would be correct to use the word ‘sustainable’ here, for that was the meaning underlying the discourse. Such articulation might be misleading though, since the concept of ‘sustainable development’ had not yet been formulated. Texts from this period reveal, however, that Icelanders were clearly influenced by the international debate, and indeed they took part in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm 1972, where the foundations for what later became known as ‘sustainable development’ were laid (for discussion about the Icelandic participation in the Stockholm conference, see Guttormsson, 1974).

operating after the Act was signed into law, although with limited resources provided, but was empowered with the 1971 Act. One of the tasks originally given to the Council was to make a 'Registry of Sites of Natural Interest' (*Náttúrumínjaskrá*) of all natural heritage that was considered to be worthy of protection in the future, with the assistance of the Nature Conservation Committees, local governments and interested parties (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956). Work on the Registry, though, was carried out systematically only after 1971. Partly this was due to the lack of resources, but also to a lack of clarifications on the subject. These matters were refined with the 1971 revision, and a regulation made on its basis in 1973 (Reglugerð um náttúruvernd no. 205/1973). The eventual making of the Registry furthermore benefitted greatly from the work of the previously mentioned non-governmental associations. In fact, part of their activity was to study their regions and to come up with a list of suggestions for natural heritage to be protected. The lists were submitted to the Nature Conservation Council (Guttormsson, 1974; Hallgrímsson, 2010) and many of these suggestions found their way to the Registry, which was first published in 1975. By then, all in all some 91 places were listed as potential areas for protection, while 29 had already gained some kind of protection (Náttúruverndarráð, 1975).

According to the legislation, sites listed in the Registry should be described in terms of ownership and usufruct, desirable boundaries, conservation value, risks, and measures needed for carrying out its protection (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 47/1971; Reglugerð um náttúruvernd no. 205/1973, art. 25). As it turned out, however, the description was usually somewhat simpler. The identification and description of the conservation value was based on a subjective evaluation, as witnessed by the words of Helgi Hallgrímsson, former president of SUNN, who took active part in this work: "For assessing the conservation value of places and areas, *landslag* was predominantly used as a frame of reference, i.e. its uniqueness, diversity and beauty. Also the geological history and biotic nature were considered" (Hallgrímsson, 2010, 32). It was here that the call for scientific knowledge, discussed in the previous section, gradually became relevant.

Stipulated in the 1971 Act, was a Nature Conservation Assembly (*Náttúruverndarþing*) to be held every three years. The first took place in 1972. At the 1975 Assembly it was decided that the Nature Conservation Council would closely examine the Nature Conservation Act. This work of the Council resulted in recommendations that eventually led to a bill presented to Alþingi in 1985, for yet another revision of the Act (Þingskjal 529, 1985). It is worth noting that while this bill discussed the Registry of Sites of Natural Interest, it made no remarks about how to describe sites listed in the Registry. The only statement on this matter is that the Registry should account for the reasons for protecting a particular area. This bill was not discussed in Alþingi, but the work of the Council on refining the guidelines for nature conservation continued.

In 1990 the Ministry for the Environment was established. The conservation discourse during the years immediately before and after this concentrated to a great extent on its establishment. In 1994 a bill on changes to the Act on Nature Conservation, was presented to Alþingi, first in its spring session (Þingskjal 615, 1994), and again in the autumn session the same year (Þingskjal 128, 1994). This bill was first and foremost intended to change the administration of conservation, following the establishment of the Ministry, but it also touched upon more fundamental conservation issues that were partly inspired by guidelines

issued by the Council in 1993 (Náttúruverndarráð, 1993). The proposed changes to the categories for protection are interesting for this discussion.

The bill proposed that in order to strengthen the protection of certain species, which either were protected under the Nature Conservation Act or the Bird Protection Act (Lög um vernd, friðun og veiðar á villtum fuglum og villtum spendýrum no. 64/1994), the *habitats* of those species should also be protected. Here we see a clear influence from the science of ecology in the legislative discourse. The bill furthermore discussed the Registry and suggested that, in addition to the sites listed, it should also contain a list of microorganisms, plants, animals, and ecosystems, which ideally should be protected in order to preserve biological diversity. Again we see influence from ecology and a growing emphasis on the natural sciences. As for how to present sites listed in the Registry, the bill stressed the importance of a detailed argumentation for their protection. This is in line with the guidelines from the Council, later published as ‘Policy for Nature Conservation’ (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b) where it is recommended to nominate sites to the Registry on the grounds of research. Also recommended for the Registry is classification of sites in terms of standardised criteria. Clearly evident in this document is an emphasis on research. It was argued that research of the natural environment should be the basis for protection and other land use in protected areas (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b). The call for scientific knowledge for the conservation of nature was thus increasingly being responded to. The 1994 bill furthermore envisioned a bigger role for the Registry: as a formal strategy for conservation. On the whole, a growing emphasis on more systematic methods is evident.

Despite lengthy discussions the 1994 bill was not passed, but in 1996 a new bill on nature conservation was introduced, which after some discussion got approval and was signed into law (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 93/1996). This 1996 Act confirmed the changes previously suggested to the categories for protection, of protecting the habitats of protected species, and also ecosystems. Regarding the Registry of Sites of Natural Interest, the Act did not discuss explicitly the importance of research for suggesting sites to the Registry. However, the novelty of the Act was to stipulate that the Nature Conservation Agency (*Náttúruvernd ríkisins*), which was set up under the new Act, would collect data for listing sites to the Registry in cooperation with the Icelandic Institute for Natural History (*Náttúrufræðistofnun*). In practice, this translated into an attempt to fully adopt the methods of the natural sciences. This is discussed thoroughly in the first paper constituting this thesis (Paper I).

The 1996 Act was the first step of two in a thorough revision of the Nature Conservation Act, which was thought to be vital for responding to a changing scene in government after the establishment of the Ministry for the Environment, and also to changing perspectives in nature conservation within conservation circles. The 1996 Act dealt mainly with the administrative part, and on this occasion the role of the Nature Conservation Council was substantially reduced. Administrative handlings were now in the hands of the Minister for the Environment and the new Nature Conservation Agency. Five years later the Council was abolished.

In 1999 Alþingi completed this thorough revision with the enactment of a new and revised Act on Nature Conservation no. 44/1999. On the whole, the main emphasis of this second revision was on adjusting the Act to existing legislation and international treaties that Iceland had signed. Great emphasis was also put on the participation of conservation

authorities in land use planning, on both regional and national levels. Provisions for protection, however, remained mostly unaltered, as it was asserted in the Explanatory Report, which accompanied the bill, that the existing provisions had given good results up until then (Þingskjal 848, 1999). The categories for protection and their premises therefore stayed the same, apart from the distinguishing between natural monuments on land and sea, as previously pointed out. Some novelties were introduced though, the most important of which for this discussion, was the Nature Conservation Strategy (*Náttúruverndaráætlun*) to be made every five years. The Strategy was a plan for protection and was supposed to be a part of the Registry of Sites of Natural Interests. In practice the relations between the Strategy and the Registry proved to be confusing, and the Registry has been put aside to the present day. With the 2013 Act the Registry is to be re-empowered, while the Strategy in its current form will be discontinued.

The preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy was important for different reasons, not least for the fact that it presented the first comprehensive plan and strategy to conserve nature in Iceland. This important event in the history of Icelandic nature conservation is explored and discussed in the first study of the research underpinning this thesis (Paper I). The study revealed that in the early 21st century scientific reasoning had gained great prominence in nature conservation in Iceland. At the same time previous rationalities were found inadequate for their lack of attention to the scientific method, and for their incompatibility with scientific reasoning. Previous rationalities were therefore by some regarded as dismissible.

4.7 Rebalance of rationalities?

In 2009 a new government put a revision of the 1999 Act on Nature Conservation on its agenda (Stjórnarráð Íslands, 2009). For this purpose, a committee was set up, whose purpose was to examine various elements of nature conservation. The work of the committee began in 2009 and was completed in 2011 with the publishing of a White Paper on nature conservation (Umhverfisstjórnuneytið, 2011); a massive piece of work, which on the one hand discussed foundations of nature conservation in Iceland, and on the other discussed particular issues that needed to be taken into careful consideration when drafting a new bill on nature conservation.

On the basis of the White Paper, the Minister for the Environment presented to the Alþingi a bill on nature conservation in late year 2012, which presents the most thorough revision of the Nature Conservation Act so far. The bill was widely discussed and eventually passed in Alþingi in March 2013 as a new Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013. The Act is expected to come into force on 1st April 2014¹¹.

¹¹ By the time this is written it is not clear whether this latest version will come into force. The current Minister for the Environment, of a new government that took office in 2013, has introduced in Alþingi a bill on the cancellation of the new Act on Nature Conservation, and declared that a new bill on nature conservation will instead be presented after a thorough revision. But whether the 2013 Act will come into force or not is irrelevant for the thesis. The 2013 Act still has value for documenting the conservation rationale of its time.

As previously hinted at, this latest version of the Act expanded its objective:

The purpose of this act is to conserve for the future the diversity of Icelandic nature, there amongst biological and geological diversity and the diversity of *landslag*. It is intended to ensure, to the extent possible, that Icelandic nature can develop according to its own premises, and the conservation of its exceptional or historical aspects, and also to promote the restoration of damaged ecosystems and the resilience of Icelandic ecosystems against natural disasters and global environmental changes.

The Act aims for the conservation and sustainable use of resources and other qualities of nature.

The Act shall:

- a) direct the interaction of humans with nature so that it neither harms life or land, atmosphere or waters,
- b) facilitate the public's access to and experience of the country's nature and cultural heritage which relate to nature, and to enhance knowledge and education about nature.
- c) ensure the right of the public to move around the country and enjoy nature and thus to promote general outdoor life in agreement with nature, for the sake of health and well-being of the country's inhabitants.¹²(*Lög um náttúruvernd* no. 60/2013, art. 1, my translation, italics added.)

This new objective of the Act contains all objectives found in earlier versions of the Act and more. With reference to the premises for nature conservation laid out in the 1956 Act, the 2013 Act is based on all three: social, cultural and economic premises alike. The 'modern perspectives' have been integrated into the Act's objective, and so has the ideology of sustainable development. Indeed, with reference to the Act's objective, it appears to address all relevant issues discussed in previous years, as well as major environmental issues of the present, such as global warming. Noteworthy is that nature is defined in terms of biology, geology and *landslag*. The Act therefore promises to include different perspectives of nature and its conservation.

A novelty in the 2013 Act was a reconfiguration of the Categories for Protection in line with the IUCN Protected Area Categories. This resulted in eight categories, four of which carry the same label as previous categories, although the premises for protection are somewhat different. These are:

¹² 'Markmið laga þessara er að vernda til framtíðar fjölbreytni íslenskrar náttúru, þar á meðal líffræðilega og jarðfræðilega fjölbreytni og fjölbreytni landslags. Þau eiga að tryggja eftir föngum þróun íslenskrar náttúru á eigin forsendum og verndun þess sem þar er sérstætt eða sögulegt og einnig stuðla að endurheimt raskaðra vistkerfa og auknu þoli íslenskra vistkerfa gegn náttúruhamförum og hnattrænum umhverfisbreytingum. / Lögin miða jafnframt að vernd og sjálfbærri nýtingu auðlinda og annarra náttúrugæða. / Lögin eiga að: a. stuðla að samskiptum manns og náttúru þannig að hvorki spillist líf eða land, loft eða lögur, b. auðvelda umgengni og kynni almennings af náttúru landsins og menningarminjum sem henni tengjast og efla þekkingu og fræðslu um náttúruna, c. tryggja rétt almennings til að fara um landið og njóta náttúrunnar og stuðla þannig að almennri útivist í sátt við náttúruna, landsmönnum til heilsubótar og velsældar.'

- 1) Strict nature reserves (*Náttúruvél*)
– equivalent to IUCN category Ia
- 2) Uninhabited wilderness (*Óbyggð víðerni*)
– equivalent to IUCN category Ib (wilderness area)
- 3) National parks (*Þjóðgarðar*)
– equivalent to IUCN category II
- 4) Natural monuments (*Náttúruvætti*)
– equivalent to IUCN category III (natural monument or feature)
- 5) Nature reserves (*Friðlönd*)
– equivalent to IUCN category IV (habitat species management area)
- 6) *Landslag* conservation area (*Landslagsverndarsvæði*)
– equivalent to IUCN category V (protected landscape/seascape) and VI (protected area with sustainable use of natural resources)
- 7) Marine sites of natural interest (*Náttúrumínjar í hafí*)
– equivalent to IUCN category V (protected landscape/seascape)
- 8) Country parks (*Fólkvangar*)

(Lög um náttúruvernd no. 60/2013; Þingskjal 537, 2013)

This reconfiguration was suggested in the White Paper, but had already been recommended in 1996 (see Section 5.2), in the Nature Conservation Council's 'Policy for Nature Conservation' (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b). The new categories will be discussed in the next chapter, in relation to *landslag*.

This chapter has presented the legal context of nature conservation in Iceland and revealed and discussed its prevailing rationalities, from the first Act on Nature Conservation in 1956 to the present day. When a general law in nature conservation was enacted, the guiding philosophy was both to protect nature from humans, and simultaneously to conserve nature for humans, for their enjoyment particularly but not for their economic use of the land. Enjoying nature meant that emphasis was put on aesthetic appreciation and freedom to know and access one's own country. At the same time there were deep concerns about human conduct and destructive behaviour posing threat to the natural environment. The Nature Conservation Act therefore built also on a sense of responsibility. With the ecological movement gaining ground in Iceland from the early 1970s, the focus was gradually also put on nature as a resource for economic income, and sensible use of the natural resources. While these perspectives do not rule out each other, influence from the ecological movement nevertheless resulted in the sidelining of emotional values, such as the aesthetic appreciation of nature. This appears mainly to be caused by epistemological differences: Methods of the natural sciences were gradually accepted as the only legitimate instruments for gaining knowledge about nature, as revealed in the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in the early 21st century (see Paper I). Such methods, however, are limited to the objective world and run short in exploring more subjective

values related to people's experiences. The 2013 Act may hold promises of a more inclusive approach to nature conservation, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The focus will next be put on the concept of *landslag* and its appearance within the legal discourse.

5 The *landslag* concept in the legal discourse of nature conservation

This chapter continues the discussion and analysis presented in the previous chapter. The focus is turned to the concept of *landslag* and its appearance within the legal conservation discourse, insofar as it relates to the general law in nature conservation and related documents (see introduction to Chapter 4). The chapter traces the concept through the documents and discusses separate events of its appearance, with regard to the concept's meaning. Based on the analysis presented in the previous chapter, the chapter concludes by arguing that the meaning of the concept of *landslag* within the legal discourse has been subjected to change because of developments of the conservation rationale more generally.

5.1 *Landslag* as visual appearance of land and its beauty

It was argued above that the 'National Park' category was highly significant for the conservation rationale of the mid-20th century and central to the Nature Conservation Act from the very beginning. This category is the only one of the five that identified *landslag* as a reason for areal protection in the original version of the Act. Arguably, this fact shows the importance of *landslag* in the conservation rationale at the time. Neither the Act nor its Explanatory Report explained the meaning of the concept of *landslag* (cf. Þórhallsdóttir et al., 2010). Rather than indicating a lack of interest, presumably the lack of explanation stems from the simple fact that there was a shared understanding of the concept, which explains also why it was chosen to concisely represent a much more comprehensive discussion found in the Explanatory Report. A thorough reading of these texts may therefore give some insight into the meaning of *landslag*.

The authors of the 1956 Act spent considerable effort discussing the national park idea and highlighted the cultural and social premises underlying this particular form of conservation (Þingskjal 232, 1956). Nature and natural processes were supposed to be at the forefront, and all people should be able to enjoy the wonders of nature. The authors furthermore specified that a national park should cover a rather large area and that protection in these terms would exclude the presence of farm animals. What stands out is a celebration of 'wild' nature, where human impact is kept to a minimum. This applied to farming as well, which was regarded as one way of interfering with natural processes. This is very much in line with the North American national park idea, which could not accept local inhabitants within boundaries of a national park, given that its purpose was to preserve wildlife and scenery. This is an idea that has later been thoroughly challenged, for example with the conception of cultural landscape, which in contrast acknowledges the active role of farming

in the formation of landscapes. Anyway, what can be read from this, then, is that for those who drafted the 1956 Act, *landslag* is found in large areas and wild nature.

But *landslag* is also mentioned in the 2nd article of the 1956 Act, which says:

If a proposed construction or ground disturbance outside towns and villages carries with it a risk of altering the appearance of an unusual *landslag*, or for the destruction of important sites of natural interest, it is mandatory to seek the advice of the Nature Conservation Council before the enterprise begins.

...

If there is a risk that an unusual *landslag* or important sites of natural value will be disturbed by the extraction of sand or rock or other kinds of minerals, nature conservation committees can prohibit such ground disturbance and stipulate that permission be sought for each time minerals are extracted. (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 48/1956, art. 2, my translation, italics added)

The former mention of the word here clearly relates *landslag* to appearance, and hence to visual perception, while the second mention of the word is less suggestive. For a deeper understanding it is useful to read this text of the 2nd article in the context of the chapter in which it is placed; a chapter titled ‘About damage to nature and eyesore in nature’¹³. The title points to aesthetic evaluation and articles under this heading are clearly grounded in the cultural premises for conservation that were listed above, i.e. to avoid doing damage to nature through construction activities, and to preserve beautiful areas, as well as to promote good conduct in order to prevent the disfiguring of nature. It may therefore reasonably be argued that the visual perception denoted by *landslag* connotes aesthetic evaluation as well.

Important to note here is that *landslag* is mentioned in two different contexts for conserving nature: on the one hand in relation to areal protection, and on the other in relation to promoting good behaviour in sites of construction and extraction, which are not protected. These latter provisions, however, were downgraded with the refinement of the original Act made in 1971: The chapter ‘About damage to nature and eyesore in nature’ was removed, and the provisions of its articles, significantly reduced, were integrated into another chapter titled ‘Public access to the nature of the country and conduct’. After the 1971 Act was signed into law, landowners were free to extract minerals from their land, provided the area was not protected. Only if the minerals were to be removed from the property should the ground disturbance be announced to the local Nature Conservation Committee. It was then up to the local government to decide whether to prohibit the disturbance or not. Hence the Nature Conservation Council and Committees no longer had the authority to prohibit the extraction of minerals, which anyway was most often permitted. These issues gave rise to changes in the legislation in 1999, as will be discussed shortly.

Returning to the aesthetic value of *landslag*: A broader reading of the Explanatory Report from 1956 further supports this argumentation. One of the aims of its introductory chapter is to discuss the need for a general legislation on nature conservation in Iceland. For this purpose, the authors list a few examples where human conduct already had caused damage

¹³ ‘Um náttúruspjöll og náttúrulýti’

to the natural environment. The authors successively describe how a certain area was deprived of an “exceptional experience of wilderness”; how “beautiful” craters were damaged during the construction of a road, and therefore a “beautiful and unusual” area was destroyed; how “most beautiful” fossils were being mistreated; how “beautiful” hot springs were at risk because of the poor conduct of travellers. The authors also highlighted a case of exemplary behaviour, where a “beautiful” riverside and a “marvellous” islet were spared during the construction of a bridge (Þingskjal 232, 1956, 852-853). Hence, the Explanatory Report to the first Act on Nature Conservation is saturated with aesthetic reasoning, although the word ‘beautiful’ only in one instance found its way to the Act itself. Instead the Act mentions ‘appearance’ and ‘exceptional’ and ‘unusual’ flora, fauna, natural formations, and *landslag*.

How the Act was put into practice may also give an insight into the meaning of its concepts. In the case of the national park category, Skaftafell National Park was the first to be designated under the Act, to be established at the property of Skaftafell farm. Its nomination was proposed in 1960 by geologist and geographer Sigurður Þórarinnsson, one of the authors of the 1956 Act. In his proposal he said:

There is no doubt that the beauty of nature in Skaftafell in Öräfi is the most magnificent of any place inhabited in Iceland. There are to be found most of the things that above all make Icelandic nature beautiful. The magnificence of the landscape is not greater in many other places, if any, and the view to the highest mountain in the country, the biggest outlet glacier, and the vastest of sands, is incomparable. The property contains beautifully and variously shaped mountains and rocks. There is one of the most remarkable outlet glaciers in the country, Morsárjökull. On the property there are waterfalls and ravines praised for their beauty. The vegetation is more luxuriant and diverse than in most other places, since no other farm, except for the neighbouring farm Svínafell, has more auspicious weather conditions. Since the property of Skaftafell is so neatly enclosed on all sides, apart from Skeiðarársandur, by nature, glaciers and glacial rivers, it is easy to protect the land from trespassing without expensive fences. In short, I know of no other area in Iceland than the land of Skaftafell that is more suitable to be protected as a national park. (Sigurður Þórarinnsson, 1960 in Jón Gauti Jónsson, 1985, my translation)

Given that these words were written by one of the authors of the 1956 Act on Nature Conservation four years after its enactment, and given that he was here arguing for the establishment of the first national park under the Act, it may reasonably be concluded that this is a description of an ‘exceptional *landslag*’; a description where natural formations are in the forefront along with an aesthetic appreciation of them. The only indication of humans in this *landslag* is where the property is described as neatly enclosed by nature, which would help to hinder trespassing. The fact that the Skaftafell farm had been inhabited for centuries (see Ives, 2007) appears to have no significance in this context.

Skaftafell National Park was established in 1967. A regulation for the park was published in 1968 (Reglugerð um þjóðgarðinn í Skaftafelli í Öräfum no. 229/1968). This was an imperfect regulation that lacked most basic information, such as description of its boundaries and objectives. In 1984 a revised regulation stipulated its boundaries (Reglugerð um þjóðgarð í Skaftafelli no. 319/1984), but it was not until 2004 that the

objectives of the park were defined in a new regulation. It stated: “The purpose of establishing and operating Skaftafell National Park is to conserve the *landslag*, the biotic nature, and cultural heritage of the area, and to give the public the opportunity to learn about and enjoy its nature and history” (Reglugerð um Skaftafellspjóðgarð no. 879/2004, art. 1).

As mentioned earlier, the 1971 revision of the Act added ‘special *landslag*’ to the reasons for designating a nature reserve (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 47/1971). The authors of the Act clarified that this implied restrictions on construction which would damage the visual appearance of the given area (Þingskjal 617, 1970). This further confirms the argument made earlier, i.e. that *landslag* denotes the visual perception of nature. Although there is no mention of aesthetic values here, this change in the legislation shows that the visual value alone of an area, as represented with the word *landslag* was considered to be a reason valid enough for its protection.

The meaning of *landslag* revealed above implies that *landslag* is found in wild nature or at least in the natural environment where human impact is kept to a minimum. *Landslag* denotes a visual perception of the land, and the visual perception aspect is considered to be valuable. Implicit in the *landslag* discourse is furthermore an aesthetic value. This is the meaning of the *landslag* concept within the Act on Nature Conservation when it was first passed in 1956. This meaning of the concept accompanied the revisions of the Act in 1971, 1996 and 1999, through the categories for protection that mostly remained the same. However, it does not mean that this was its sole meaning during all this time. On the contrary, the concept of *landslag* proved to be open to change.

5.2 *Landslag* becomes an area

Landslag was a topic of discussion in the Explanatory Report of the 1985 bill on nature conservation, which was mentioned above; a bill that was based on recommendations of the Nature Conservation Council. It was presented to Alþingi by the Minister of Education, but was never discussed and thus ended there. Nevertheless the bill is valuable for documenting the development of the conservation rationale in the legal discourse.

Regarding *landslag*, the Report of 1985 mentions a suggestion which came forward during the 3rd Nature Conservation Assembly in 1978, of creating a new category for protection; a so-called ‘conservation area’ (*verndarsvæði*). According to the suggestion, this category should apply to areas protected on grounds of diverse *landslag* and geological formations. The report then states: “This is referred to also as ‘*landslag* conservation’ [*landslagsvernd*] in the strict meaning” (Þingskjal 529, 1985). What the strict meaning stands for is not obvious, but what is worth noting here is that this is the first time that the ‘*landslag* conservation’ is mentioned in the legal discourse; in other words where *landslag* is identified as a specific entity and object of conservation and protection.

As discussed above, the general legislation on nature conservation included provisions for the protection of areas as national parks on grounds of exceptional *landslag*, and also the protection of areas as nature reserves on grounds of special *landslag*. In neither of these cases was *landslag* referred to as a specific entity or object of protection, but as a

significant feature of the area under discussion. And indeed it was recognised during the 1978 Assembly that areas of this proposed new category could also fall within the existing categories of ‘nature reserve’, ‘natural monument’ and even ‘country park’. This suggestion was therefore abandoned and replaced with another which expanded the conservation category of ‘natural monument’. Accordingly, the description of this category would then have included the following text: “Counting as a natural monument is also a specific *landslag* (area), seen from a particular viewpoint or route, which is considered to be so beautiful and exceptional that there is reason to protect its look and total appearance” (Þingskjal 529, 1985). While the previous suggestion identified *landslag* as a specific entity, this latter suggestion goes much further by explicating ‘specific *landslag*’ to be an area. Furthermore, it is an area that is defined by its visual appearance and natural beauty. This latter suggestion was also dismissed at the 1978 Assembly. Unfortunately the report does not say why this amendment to the legislation was thought to be needed to begin with. What can be read from this, though, is that in the late 1970s *landslag* in itself was becoming an object of conservation and protection, and that the meaning of the *landslag* concept had simultaneously started to change. No longer was it conceived of merely as feature of the natural environment, but also as a distinct area in the realm of nature, still defined by its visual appearance and beauty.

The Council evidently continued the discussion on *landslag* in the following years. In 1993 the 8th Nature Conservation Assembly was held, this time dedicated to nature conservation policy. For this occasion the Council handed out a draft manuscript titled ‘Policy for Nature Conservation’, in which one chapter is dedicated to *landslag* conservation, defined as follows:

The objective of ‘*landslag* conservation’ [*landslagsvernd*] consists somewhat in preserving what is original. With *landslag* conservation the aim is to preserve large ‘*landslag* entities’ [*landslagsheildir*], which for the most are still unspoiled. In the future the emphasis could perhaps become to rectify mistakes of the 20th century. (Náttúruverndarráð, 1993, 17, my translation, italics and quotation marks added).

A reading of the whole chapter clarifies that the ‘original’ here refers to pristine land. Hence, *landslag* here still refers to wild nature unaltered from human impact. What is meant with the words ‘to rectify mistakes of the 20th century’ is unclear. It may refer to restoration, but this is mentioned as a possibility in the future. A new concept appears; a ‘*landslag* entity’, which arguably denotes some kind of boundaries, and hence connotes an areal understanding. Noteworthy is, however, the absence of any mention of beauty of nature, which had been so prominent previously. Regarding this, the 1993 manuscript of the ‘Policy’ says in this same chapter:

It is the duty of Icelanders to conserve beautiful *landslag* and exceptional phenomena that are unusual in this part of the world, e.g. lavas, wide open spaces, major waterfalls and geothermal areas. (Náttúruverndarráð, 1993, 17, my translation, italics and quotation marks added)

The draft also discussed a “tasteful finish” of constructions as part of *landslag* conservation, very much in line with the emphasis of the 2nd article of the 1956 Act, that was discussed above. In 1996 a final version of the ‘Policy for Nature Conservation’ was

published (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b). In this published version the definition of ‘*landslag* conservation’ stayed the same, but all mention of beauty in relation to *landslag* had been removed.¹⁴ The meaning of *landslag* as an area was thus slowly becoming more objective.

Why the meaning of concepts changes is of course a big question, to which there are perhaps merely speculative answers. In the case of *landslag*, part of the answer may arguably be found in the ‘Policy’ itself, where it says:

In some instances there should be regulations on regional basis about *landslag* conservation. In our neighbouring countries, in some places, there is a big emphasis on the so-called ‘inhabited *landslag*’ [*byggðalandslag*] in this concern, but our present legislation does hardly cover its conservation. The ‘inhabited *landslag*’ and other ‘*landslag* entities’ [*landslagsheildir*] can easily be destroyed, e.g. with buildings, cables, forestry, draining, and even fences. (Náttúruverndarráð, 1993,17-18; 1996b, 4, my transl., it.and quot.marks added)

This call for regulations on regional basis is not supported with actual examples of where such provisions might have been needed, or for which reasons. Therefore it remains unclear whether it actually stemmed from a perceived need for conserving ‘inhabited *landslag*’ in Iceland, or whether the measures for conserving ‘inhabited *landslag*’ in our ‘neighbouring countries’ were perceived as a desirable model for conserving different ‘*landslag* entities’ that are found in Iceland. In either way this paragraph reflects conceptual influence from ‘our neighbouring countries’. It is tempting to assume that the ‘inhabited *landslag*’ (*byggðalandslag*) used here is a translation of the Norwegian word ‘*bygdelandskap*’, that was used around this time within the growing discourse of ‘cultural landscape’ in Norway, referring to the landscape of the countryside; its meaning closely resembling that of the English concept ‘rural landscape’ (M. Jones & Daugstad, 1997).

Presumably this influence also has a wider relation as well to the growing emphasis of protecting cultural landscapes in European countries at large, witnessed for example with The European Landscape Convention that was already in the making at this time (see Council of Europe, 2000b). Also relevant here is that in 1978 the IUCN published their first set of Protected Area Categories, one of which was ‘Protected landscape’ and related to the notion of cultural landscapes (Dudley, 2008). Indeed the Nature Conservation Council recommended the use of the IUCN categories in future development of conservation in Iceland (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b). In this regard, it is important to note that the ‘*landslag* conservation’ described in the Council’s Policy does not propose a new category for protection but presupposes that the objective of conserving *landslag* can be reached with general measures.

It must be said, then, that it seems somewhat contradictory to relate to the discourse of cultural landscape, which incorporates culture-nature linkages into conservation, based on

¹⁴ It should be acknowledged here that the recognition of beauty of nature had not been removed altogether from the Policy, although this was so in the case of *landslag*. The Policy stated in its introduction that part of the aims of nature conservation in general is “to protect diverse and beautiful environment” and “to conserve natural phenomena because of their beauty and intrinsic value” (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b, 2). How the concept of ‘environment’ enters the legislation on nature conservation is a subject worth studying, although this will not be done here.

the argumentation that all landscapes are inherently cultural (Philips, 1998), and at the same time to define ‘*landslag* conservation’ as preservation of pristine land. The international influence at this time therefore appears not to have been profound, but served at least to support a conceptualisation of *landslag* as area.

To sum this up, in the late 1970s *landslag* had come to be understood as an object for conservation and protection. The meaning of the concept had simultaneously started to change in legal and institutional discourse. Up until then *landslag* had been used to denote a feature of the natural environment, more precisely its visual appearance, and implicit in such conceptualisation was aesthetic value. Changes in the meaning of the concept first appeared when *landslag* was identified with an area. In the early 1990s the areal understanding was accompanied by the downplaying of the aesthetic value. *Landslag*, however, was still seen as part of nature (as opposed to culture), even though these changes presumably were caused by influence from Europe, where attention to cultural landscapes and their protection had been growing.

5.3 Conceptual confusion in matters of *landslag*

Although the meaning of the *landslag* concept had started to change within the legal discourse, this new understanding did not replace the former understanding described earlier. Various meanings, however, resulted in confusion in matters of *landslag* in the discourse of nature conservation.

In 1995 Hjörleifur Guttormsson, a member of Alþingi (1978–1999) and former member of the Nature Conservation Council (1972–1978), introduced a bill on changes to the Act on Nature Conservation (Þingskjal 107, 1995). The novelty of this bill was to add a new chapter to the Act, titled ‘*Landslag* conservation’ (*Landslagsvernd*), with seven new articles. It had a double purpose. One was to suggest the general protection of certain ‘types of *landslag*’ (*landslagsgerðir*), where the ground could not be disturbed without a formal permission. These ‘types of *landslag*’ were: “volcanoes, pseudo-craters and lavafields; lakes and pools larger than 100 square meters¹⁵; natural water beds, rivers and brooks; marshes, bogs and fens larger than 1 hectare¹⁶; sea shores, coastlines and mud flats” (Þingskjal 107, 1995). The other purpose was to impose restrictions on ground disturbance and extraction of materials in general, in order to protect the visual appearance of land throughout the country. In his argumentation, Guttormsson referred to provisions of the 1956 Act which were meant to deal with such matters, but that had been severely downgraded with the 1971 revision. More precisely, he was referring to the 2nd article of the 1956 Act discussed above.

Two issues are of relevance for the discussion here:

First, Guttormsson chooses to use the concept ‘*landslag* conservation’ (*landslagsvernd*), in line with the development of the *landslag* discourse over the previous two decades or so.

¹⁵ In subsequent bills this was increased to 250 square meters.

¹⁶ In subsequent bills this was increased to 2,5 hectares.

As for the restrictions on ground disturbance in general, the meaning of ‘*landslag* conservation’ is here in line with that presented in the Council’s ‘Policy’, i.e. it does not suggest a specific category for protection to conserve *landslag*, but sees the objective to be reached with general measures in planning and the promotion of good conduct. The meaning of *landslag* relating to this part of the bill is thus in line with its meaning as presented in the original Act on Nature Conservation, i.e. *landslag* refers to visual appearance of the land.

Second, regarding the ‘types of *landslag*’, the conceptualisation of *landslag* conversely appears to rely on the areal understanding that was also discussed above. To presuppose that there are different types of *landslag* simultaneously suggests the existence of geographically bounded units. But rather than defining the *landslag* area, i.e. the ‘types of *landslag*’, by its visual appearance, as was done when such connotations first appeared in the late 1970s, the *landslag* area is defined by natural formations. Interestingly, this is the first time in the legal discourse where such a linkage is made. What we see is a clear objectification of *landslag*. And for the record, there is no mention of beauty in nature.

The bill was not discussed in Alþingi this time, but Guttormsson persistently presented the bill four more times (Þingskjal 97, 1995; Þingskjal 529, 1997; Þingskjal 73, 1997; Þingskjal 84, 1998;) and eventually his ideas were taken up in a revised version of the Act on Nature Conservation signed into law in 1999. The 1999 Act thus contained a new chapter titled ‘*Landslag* conservation’ (*Landslagsvernd*) and another one titled ‘Extraction of earth materials’ (*Nám jarðefna*), both of which partly built on the proposal from Guttormsson. Accordingly, the chapter ‘*Landslag* conservation’ in the 1999 Act is not about designating protected areas, but about safeguarding the visual appearance of land in general by imposing restrictions on ground disturbance. For strengthening these provisions, certain ‘types of *landslag*’ gained “special protection” (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 44/1999, art. 37), without undergoing the process of designation in accordance with the categories for protection. These were: a) volcanic craters, pseudo-craters and lava fields; b) lakes and pools larger than 1000 square meters; c) bogs and fens; d) waterfalls, hot springs and other thermal sources, as well as mineral deposits in geothermal areas larger than 100 square meters; e) salt marshes and mud flats. Although this chapter was new to the general legislation, its novelty was less than what might appear, for some of these provisions picked up a strand of the original Act that had been neglected since 1971.

I have mentioned above a few concepts based on *landslag* that emerged at this time: ‘*landslag* entity’ (*landslagsheild*) and ‘type of *landslag*’ (*landslagsgerð*). Another similar concept appeared in the Council’s Policy, which was ‘characteristic feature of *landslag*’ (*landslagseinkenni*), which were listed as: “waterfalls, caves, ravines, cliffs, rocks and singular mountains” (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b, 11). The 1993 draft had previously referred to these as ‘*landslag* phenomena’ (*landslagsfyrirbæri*) (Náttúruverndarráð, 1993, 12). These concepts all represent an attempt to handle the changing meaning of the *landslag* concept, i.e. the areal understanding that was emerging from the late 1970s. As already pointed out (Section 1.2) the Icelandic word *landslag* does not exist in plural. It is a mass noun, denoting something that cannot be counted. The areal understanding of the concept is therefore linguistically problematic, which arguably explains the emergence of these new concepts. The latter two mentioned above, ‘type of *landslag*’ and ‘characteristic feature of *landslag*’, furthermore reveal an attempted objectification of the concept, by

defining the *landslag* area in terms of natural formations instead of visual appearance, while at the same time its aesthetic value was sidelined. Here we see also a linkage to a theoretical conceptualisation of landscape within geography, present for example in the Preusser's (1976) *Landscapes of Iceland: Types and Regions* (see Section 2.4).

Adding to the conceptual confusion was, then, the adoption of theoretical concepts from different disciplines of other linguistic communities that reflect different notions of 'cultural landscape'. This includes concepts such as: 'inhabited *landslag*' (*byggðalandslag*) that was already mentioned, another one was '*landslag* of human habitation' (*mannvistarlandslag*) (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996b, 10). It should be kept in mind that the current analysis is based only on documents of the legal discourse. In reality, more varieties of these concepts were entering the experts' discourse at this time. This conceptual diversity, however, did not develop out of thorough inspection, but appears to have been somewhat spontaneous. This was problematic.

In 2001 a bill on changes to the Act on Nature Conservation (Þingskjal 160, 2001) was introduced to Alþingi. This bill proposed a change to the wording of the Act. It was argued that *landslag* had been defined as forms and looks of nature, and thus corresponded to the visual appearance of land, including its shape, texture and colour. The items listed as types of *landslag*, conversely, were identified as natural phenomena. Which definition of *landslag* was being referred to was not mentioned in the bill, but at this time the concept had still not been defined in any legal documents. But this led to the wording 'types of *landslag*' being replaced with 'geological formations and ecosystems' in the Act. In practice, this change did not reduce the conservation of *landslag*, for the items previously listed as 'types of *landslag*' still remained protected, even though after the change they were identified differently. Other provisions stipulated within the chapter of 'Landslag conservation' furthermore remained the same. But one can speculate as to whether the changing of the wording weakened the conceptual framework which the experts in conservation had to work with.

5.4 Legal definitions of the concept of *landslag*

The study of the preparation of the Nature Conservation Strategy presented in Paper I, revealed the experts' desire for a consistent framework. The experts saw it of great importance to define the *landslag* concept in legislation. It was argued among the experts that based on a legal definition, *landslag* could be categorised and consequently it would be possible to assemble a countrywide database on which basis conservation areas could be objectively selected, provided that an appropriate method was available. Hence, conservation work in terms of *landslag* was all seen to depend upon a proper definition of the concept.

In late 2004, six months after Alþingi passed a parliamentary resolution on the Nature Conservation Strategy (Þingskjal 1842, 2004), a working group of experts from The Icelandic National Planning Agency (*Skipulagsstofnun*) and the Environment and Food Agency of Iceland (UST, *Umhverfisstofnun*), wrote a memorandum of discussions and proposals on *landslag* for the Ministry for the Environment (Gunnarsson, Elmarsdóttir, Friðriksdóttir, & Baldursson, 2004). One of these experts had participated in the

preparation of the Nature Conservation Strategy, and the first phase of the Master Plan for hydro- and geothermal energy resources in Iceland (see Section 2.4). The memorandum drew upon these experiences. The group urged that the following measures be taken:

Landslag to be defined in the Act on Nature Conservation, The Act on Environmental Impact Assessment, and The Planning and Building Act.

Types of *landslag* to be identified.

A recognised methodology to be established to assess the value of *landslag* and impact on *landslag*. (Gunnarsson et al., 2004, 10, my translation, italics added)

The group also provided definitions of *landslag* and other related concepts that had appeared in the previous years, such as a) ‘*landslag* entity’ (*landslagsheild*), b) ‘appearance of the environment’, ‘appearance of land’, and ‘holistic appearance of land’ (*ásýnd umhverfis, svipmót lands og heildarsvipmót lands*), c) ‘*landslag* conservation’ (*landslagsvernd*), d) ‘type of *landslag*’ (*landslagsgerð*), and e) ‘classification of *landslag*’ (*landslagsflokkun*).

The group suggested that the definition of landscape in the European Landscape Convention be adopted:

"Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. (Council of Europe, 2000a, art. 1, §a).

The Icelandic version provided in the memorandum was very close to the original definition:

Landslag is an area that people perceive to have a specific character, which is the result of the action or interaction of natural and/or human factors.¹⁷ (Gunnarsson et al., 2004, 3, my translation, italics added)

The group further elaborated this definition to refer to: “forms, outlines, texture, colours or pattern of colours, and the experience of *landslag* felt within the subject” (Gunnarsson et al., 2004, 3). Noteworthy is that this elaboration is almost identical to the reasoning presented when the wording of the Nature Conservation Act was changed in 2001 (see Section 5.3). The group specified also that this definition included both objective and subjective features of *landslag*, and recognised that the subjective features would be more difficult to deal with. It was then argued that this definition made it imperative to identify the various types of *landslag*, which subsequently would be classified in terms of their conservation values, including its aesthetic and experiential value.

Judging from the memorandum, the group appears to have combined attributes of the two different meanings of *landslag* that were present in the conservation discourse: *landslag* as visual appearance and appreciation of beauty, and *landslag* as area. It appears also that they

¹⁷ ‘Landslag er svæði sem fólk skynjar að hafi ákveðin einkenni sem eru tilkomin vegna virkni eða samspils náttúrulega og/eða mannlegra þátta’.

saw the ELC to represent a way to compromise the two, and indeed the group also urged that the ELC be signed and ratified by the Icelandic authorities.

As for the ‘landslag conservation’, the group upheld the two different understandings of this concept since it appeared in the late 1970s. Thus, according to the memorandum, *landslag* conservation could imply either the designation of protected areas in terms of *landslag*, or the promotion of good conduct at construction sites. It is noteworthy here that this is very much in line with the context of *landslag* in the 1956 Act on Nature Conservation.

5.4.1 The Planning Act no. 123/2010

One of the tasks of the new government in 2009 was to sign and ratify the ELC, in line with suggestions from the memorandum discussed above, “with the aim of protecting *landslag* entities [*landslagsheildir*] and unspoiled wilderness” (Stjórnarráð Íslands, 2009). This was partly to be accomplished during its time in office; in 2012 Iceland signed the ELC, but the Convention is yet to be ratified by the time this is written. Nevertheless the ELC has already put its mark on Icelandic legislation.

In 2010 the following first legal definition of *landslag* appeared in a new Planning Act:

Landslag means an area which has appearance and character because of natural and/or human-made factors and interaction between them. *Landslag* thus applies to the everyday environment, environment with conservation value, and degraded environment. *Landslag* includes, inter alia, urban areas, rural areas, wilderness, rivers, lakes, and marine areas.¹⁸ (Skipulagslög no. 123/2010, art.2, §13, my translation, italics added)

The idea of including a definition of *landslag* in the Planning Act can be seen to be effected directly by the memorandum from 2004. The definition of *landslag* was not part of the original bill introduced in Alþingi (Þingskjal 742, 2010), but formal proposals of defining *landslag* in the Act came both from the Planning Agency and The Federation of Icelandic Landscape Architects. Both suggested that the ELC definition of landscape be adopted and each provided their translation/interpretation thereof:

Landslag means an area, as perceived by the public, which has appearance and character because of natural and/or human-made factors and interaction between them.¹⁹ (Skipulagsstofnun, 2010, my translation, italics added)

Landslag means an area, which people see and has acquired its appearance and character because of the interaction between natural and/or human factors.²⁰ (Félag íslenskra landslagsarkitekta, 2010, my translation, italics added)

¹⁸ ‘Landslag merkir svæði sem hefur ásýnd og einkenni vegna náttúrulegra og/eða manngerðra þátta og samspils þar á milli. Landslag tekur þannig til daglegs umhverfis, umhverfis með verndargildi og umhverfis sem hefur verið raskað. Undir landslag fellur m.a. þéttbýli, dreifbýli, ósnortin víðerni, ár, vötn og hafsvæði.’

¹⁹ ‘Landslag merkir svæði, eins og almenningur skynjar það, sem hefur ásýnd og einkenni vegna náttúrulegra og/eða manngerðra þátta og samspili [*sic*] þar á milli.’

As it turned out, however, the definition of *landslag* was created by a parliamentary committee. The result is a strange and selective mixture of the definition of landscape found in the 1st article of the ELC, partly based on the translation offered by the Planning Agency, and the 2nd article of the ELC, which describes the scope of the Convention, with some add-ons that possibly were intended to emphasise specific features of Icelandic *landslag*.

5.4.2 The Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013

One of the tasks given to the White Paper committee for particular consideration was the conservation of *landslag* and areas, also with regard to cultural *landslag* (*menningarlandslag*) (Umhverfisstjórnuneytið, 2011).

The White Paper committee suggested that a definition of *landslag* be adopted in a new version of the Act on Nature Conservation. The committee furthermore suggested adopting the translation provided in the 2004 memorandum (Section 5.4), rather than the one provided in the official translation of the Convention, which states:

Landslag means an area that shows signs of in people's perception to have come into being by means of nature and/or with human intervention.²¹ (Council of Europe, 2000c, art.1, §a, my translation, italics added)

This official translation, the committee argued, was not as good, and less accurate than the version provided in the 2004 memorandum. And so it was that a new Act on Nature Conservation (no.60/2013) included a definition of *landslag* based on the ELC definition as it was provided in the 2004 memorandum:

Landslag: An area that people perceive to have a specific character, which is the result of the action or interaction of natural and/or human factors.²² (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 60/2013, art.5, §12, my translation, italics added)

5.5 The conservation of *landslag* in the 2013 Act on Nature Conservation

Cultural *landslag* was not defined in the revised 2013 Act, however, cultural value of *landslag* was dealt with in a new category for protection, labelled '*Landslag* conservation area' (*landslagsverndarsvæði*) (cf. Section 4.7). Although new to the Act, this category reminds of the proposal that was suggested at the Nature Conservation Assembly in 1978 (see Section 5.2), of adding a new category for protection labelled as 'conservation area'

²⁰ 'Landslag merkir svæði sem fólk sér og fengið hefur ásynd og einkenni vegna samspils náttúrulegra og/eða mannlegra þátta.'

²¹ 'Landslag þýðir svæði sem ber það með sér í skynjun fólks að vera til orðið af náttúrunnar hendi og/eða með mannlegri íhlutun.'

²² '*Landslag*: Svæði sem fólk skynjar að hafi ákveðin einkenni sem eru tilkomin vegna virkni eða samspils náttúrulegra og/eða mannlegra þátta.'

(verndarsvæði), which was supposed to be based on *landslag*. As was the case with this early proposal, the new category of the 2013 Act implies the designation of protected areas. The Act states:

- An area of land can be protected for the conservation of *landslag*, which;
- a) is considered to be especially valuable because of its aesthetic value and/or cultural value
 - b) is believed to be special or unusual in regional, national, or global context
 - c) is important for a national sense of identity.²³(Lög um náttúruvernd no. 60/2013, art. 50, my translation, italics added)

The article then further stipulates that traditional land use is permitted if the characteristic feature of the area under discussion is seen to depend upon it. Also that constructions are permitted, provided that they accord with the appearance of the land.

Noteworthy here is the re-recognition of an aesthetic value of *landslag* being basis for conservation.

The Explanatory Report to the 2013 Act (Þingskjal 537, 2013) declares that this new category corresponds to the IUCN category V, labelled as ‘protected landscape/seascape’, although in the 2013 Act it does not include seascape. The Report also declares that this category would also encompass areas that would be classified within the category VI of the IUCN classification, labelled as ‘Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources’. The IUCN describes the Category V thus:

A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value. (Dudley, 2008, 20)

Ergo – a cultural landscape. This is very much in line with the conceptualisation of landscape within the ELC, and conforms to the meaning of the English word landscape, which explains why the category is labelled as ‘protected landscape’. But it is important to keep in mind here that the connotations embedded in the English word *landscape* do not necessarily correspond to those of the Icelandic concept *landslag* (Section 1.2, Paper II). The English landscape concept is based on societal characteristics; it is descriptive of social, historical, economic, and political processes that are reflected in the materiality of landscape. This is not the case with the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic word *landslag* (Paper IV), which conversely connotes a reference to land that is natural rather than humanly modified. The Explanatory Report notes this difference and recognises that Icelandic *landslag* is “generally more related to geological phenomena and processes” (Þingskjal 537, 2013, Um 50. gr.), and that this must be taken into account when comparing this category with the category V of the IUCN classification.

²³ ‘Friðlýsa má landsvæði til verndar landslagi sem:

- a. þykir sérlega verðmætt vegna fagurfræðilegs og/eða menningarlegs gildis,
- b. talið er sérstætt eða fágætt á svæðis-, lands- eða heimsvísu eða
- c. skipar mikilvægan sess í vitund þjóðarinnar.’

It must be noted, however, that it appears somewhat contradictory to relate in this manner to IUCN category V, yet simultaneously partly deny its fundamental premise, which is cultural landscape. This is in fact similar to when the Nature Conservation Council, first in 1993 and later in 1996, defined '*landslag* conservation' as the preservation of pristine land, and yet drew upon the discourse of cultural landscape (see Section 5.2).

As for the national parks category, it is still in place and regarded as one of the most important categories for protection. In accordance with the reconfiguration of all the categories for protection, it corresponds to the IUCN category II. Still it draws upon earlier descriptions of the national parks category, described in previous Acts, back to the 1956 Act. The Explanatory Report states, however, that this has been somewhat sharpened to specify features that previously were not mentioned in the Act as such, although implicit in the legislative discourse. The Act states:

Large natural areas that have scarcely been modified and hold exceptional or typical fauna, geological formations, and/or *landslag*, can be protected as national parks. When a decision is made to establish a national park the importance of the area in cultural and historical context shall also be considered.

The protection shall aim to conserve holistic natural ecosystems, geological formations, *landslag* and cultural remnants which are characteristic for the area and to ensure access of the public to it for outdoor activities and for getting to know the nature and history of the area. An emphasis shall be placed on education and information in this regard. (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 60/2013, art. 47, my translation, italics added)

Hence, *landslag* is still one of the features of an area on which basis the designation of a national park can be made, even if the IUCN category II does not mention landscape as part of the national parks category. Noteworthy is also that while the description of the category and its premises were said to have been sharpened, by mentioning that the area has to be natural, and large, and scarcely modified, the sharpening takes no notice of the aesthetic value that originally was implicit in the premises for this category, as previously argued (Section 5.1).

Comparison of these categories leads to the conclusion, in theory, that the aesthetic value of *landslag* is relevant only when protecting cultural landscapes, i.e. when an area is protected as a '*landslag* conservation area', in line with category V of the IUCN classification, but not when *landslag* is found in natural areas, such as those that can be protected as national parks. But then again, '*landslag* conservation areas' are not necessarily 'really' about cultural landscapes, despite the connection made with the IUCN category V. But likewise, 'in reality' the mention of *landslag* in the national parks category since 1956 implies aesthetic appreciation of the land under discussion, even if this is not stated explicitly in the Act.

Also new to the categories for protection in the 2013 Act is the 'uninhabited wilderness' (óbyggð víðerni):

Large areas of land where traces of humans are scarcely noticed and where nature is allowed to develop without pressure from human activity, can be protected as uninhabited wilderness.

The protection shall aim to preserve the character of the area, for example to maintain diverse or unusual *landslag*, wide view and/or holistic large ecosystems, and to ensure that present generations and generations to come can enjoy solitude and nature without disturbance caused by human constructs or traffic of motor vehicles. (Lög um náttúruvernd no. 60/2013, art. 46, my translation, italics added)

This category corresponds to the IUCN category Ib, labelled as wilderness area (Þingskjal 537, 2013). What is of interest for the discussion here is the mentioning of *landslag*. As with the national parks category, the IUCN description of wilderness areas does not mention landscape. Obviously this is because of the meaning of the landscape concept in English, connoting cultural landscape. Both national parks areas and uninhabited wilderness areas apply to land that has scarcely been altered by human activities. This is indeed very much in line with the culturally embedded meaning of the *landslag* concept (Paper IV). Noteworthy here is also the mention of solitude and wide view, as characteristic features of uninhabited wilderness. Both are descriptive features of the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* (Paper IV). The IUCN mentions solitude to be one of the characteristics of wilderness areas, but says nothing about wide views.

Clearly the meaning of *landslag* as articulated in the two categories of ‘national parks’ and ‘uninhabited wilderness’, is different from the meaning embedded in the ‘*landslag* conservation area’. It appears that in the case of the former two, the meaning of *landslag* corresponds to the meaning of the concept in the early days of the general law.

For the record also, since the 1971 Act on Nature Conservation, *landslag* had been listed as one of the possible reasons for an area to be protected as a nature reserve. In the 2013 Act, this is no longer the case. Nature reserves now aim to protect species and habitats, irrespective of *landslag*.

Finally, the chapter ‘*Landslag* conservation’, which first appeared in the 1999 Act and picked up some strands from the 1956 Act, was removed with the 2013 revision. This leads to the conclusion that the conservation of *landslag* has become conceived of as only to be realised with areal protection under the three categories mentioned above. Conservation of *landslag* is no longer considered to be accomplished with general measures in planning that safeguard the visual appearance of land.

To this there is one exception though. The 32. article discusses trails in the highlands and explains on which ground a decision can be made whether to identify a particular trail on a map or not. One criterion for deciding this is whether the driving on the trail is considered to likely have negative impact on the *landslag* and the appearance of the land. The words *landslag* and appearance of land were added to this article during the discussion of its bill in Alþingi. Arguably the use of the concept here is in line with the meaning of *landslag* in the 1956 Act. *Landslag* here connotes visual appearance but not an area as such.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the appearance of the *landslag* concept in the various versions of the Nature Conservation Act and related documents. The meaning of the concept at the outset of the Act was examined, as well as changes in the meaning of the concept in the following decades within the conservation discourse. Arguably there is a correlation between the conceptual changes of *landslag* and the development of the conservation rationale: As the conservation rationale increasingly relied on scientific reasoning, the *landslag* concept simultaneously became more objective. The result was a sidelining of subjective values, such as the beauty experienced in nature. Conceptual confusion between the two meanings was clearly exposed in conservation practices when the Nature Conservation Strategy was prepared. This led to the legal definition of the *landslag* concept based on the definition of landscape in ELC. The influence of the ELC appears to have prompted a return to more subjective values than those of the natural sciences, which previously had become most prominent in the conservation discourse. In the latest version of the Act on Nature Conservation, an aesthetic value of nature is recognised, to some limited extent at least, in relation to *landslag*. The two different meanings of *landslag*, however, are both discernible in the latest version of the Act and are still the cause of confusion.

6 Discussion

In this chapter I draw together different strands from results presented above and in Papers I-IV, regarding the meaning of the *landslag* concept and weave them into a coherent account with the aim of explaining the conceptual confusion, which characterised the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland. Following is a critical discussion about the legal definitions of the *landslag* concept and their conceptual distortions and limitations. On the basis of this discussion I argue for new definitions in the Act on Nature Conservation; of *landslag* and *menningarlandslag* (cultural *landslag*). This chapter finishes with some contemplation about the value of the concept of *landslag* for nature conservation and culture more generally.

6.1 On meanings of the concept of *landslag*

The conceptual exploration into the meaning of *landslag* that is presented in this thesis began with a case study of the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland that took place in the first years of this century (Paper I). The results of that study, which revealed a somewhat confusing conceptualisation of *landslag* among experts in nature conservation, gave reason to turn the concept of *landslag* itself into a subject of investigation. It appeared namely that the experts held an understanding of *landslag* that was tightly connected with the beauty of nature, which however they found to be problematic, since their task was to develop a methodology for selecting conservation areas, based on the objective reasoning of the natural sciences. But since *landslag* was mentioned as one of the objects of the natural heritage in the Act on Nature Conservation, it had to be included. The study furthermore revealed how some of the experts attempted to sway the *landslag* concept and its connotation of beauty in the direction of objective reasoning, by arguing for a universal beauty based on features of physical nature. Several empirical studies and some theorisation later, these results from the first study can now be explained.

The concept of *landslag* is deeply rooted in Icelandic culture. It is found in texts of some of the oldest manuscripts in the country that date back to the late 13th century and early 14th century. The spelling at the time was *landsleg* which literally translates into the *lie of the land*, ‘lie’ as in how and where something or someone lies. My study of the concept, as it appears in the sagas of Icelanders, reveals that the meaning of the word at the time referred to the visual perception of morphological features of natural land and was sometimes associated with aesthetic appreciation (Paper II). A very descriptive example is found in the saga of Erik the Red, which includes this sentence: “there was beautiful *landsleg*” (Eiríks saga rauða, 1935), and as pointed out in my study, was a paraphrase of “there were mountains and beautiful to look around” (Eiríks saga rauða - Texti Skálholtsbókar AM 557 4to, 1985). This meaning of the word is very similar to its ordinary present-day meaning (see Section 1.2). Based on my study of the *landsleg* concept in the sagas of Icelanders, I

therefore point out that the aesthetic appreciation of nature, as expressed with the word *landslag*/*landsleg*, cannot be explained by influence of works of the Renaissance and Romanticism, as has been done in the case of the English landscape concept (Cosgrove, 1984; Olwig, 1996). This is of course not to state that works from these periods have not influenced Icelandic culture, but studies revealing whether this is the case with regard to the concept of *landslag* have not been conducted.

This meaning of the *landslag* concept in the present was verified and deepened considerably in another study I conducted with selected individuals that represented the lay Icelandic public, as opposed to experts in conservation (Paper IV). The study revealed several themes that characterised their experience of what they recognised as *landslag*. Themes that fell into the categories of: materiality, appearance, reception and conditions. On the basis of this study I explained how the word *landslag* describes a particular experience of the world; a meaningful experience of human-nature relations. This experience relates to morphological features of land, perceived as natural rather than human-made. The relation is realised by way of seeing the land and hearing the sounds of the natural world. Under certain circumstances, the human-nature relation thus created provokes an aesthetic appreciation within the person, which is characterised by a sensation of well-being. These circumstances are mainly explained by weather conditions. The *landslag* experience is thus more likely to occur in bright and calm weather.

The statement that *landslag* is deeply rooted in Icelandic culture is therefore based on historical evidence, but it also hints at the human-nature relationship rooted in the human psyche and the experience felt within the subject, which cannot be described by social constructionism alone.

A theorisation based on actor-network theory (Latour, 1999a) and a phenomenological perspective, borrowed from the work of Merleau-Ponty (2004), informs an understanding of some ontological aspects of the *landslag* concept and deepens the insight into the *landslag* experience (Paper III). In terms of these theories, it is possible to conceive of *landslag* as relational space that is determined by the performative relation of humans and nature in a hybrid network. A space that is brought to existence by means of the human sense organs and is consequently always bound up with the bodily position of humans in the world. The simple example of a mountain and a human as co-constituting the *landslag* sheds light on this understanding: A mountain and *landslag* are not the same, although both are found in the realm of nature. But when gazed at by a human, the mountain becomes part of the *landslag*. This leads to the conclusion that there is no *landslag* without humans, as there is no *landslag* without nature. *Landslag* in this basic understanding is hence descriptive of relations between the two, between nature and humans.

Landslag understood in the terms I have outlined above, I have come to label as the ‘culturally embedded meaning of *landslag*’. The label has two different allusions: 1) The historical evidence discussed above, which shows that *landslag* has been integral to the Icelandic language since the early days of Icelandic literature. 2) *Landslag*, in this meaning of the word, is used by ordinary people in their everyday life in contemporary Iceland. The reason for labelling this meaning of the *landslag* concept, however, stems from the fact that this is not the sole meaning of *landslag* in the present, as my studies have also revealed.

When a general law in nature conservation in Iceland was enacted in 1956, *landslag* was mentioned as one of the reasons on which ground an area could be protected as a national park. The concept of *landslag* however was not defined in the Act, nor was any other concept for that matter generally speaking, neither in the Nature Conservation Act or other laws at the time. The premises for nature conservation were nevertheless expounded in the Explanatory Report that accompanied the Act. My study of the legal discourse in nature conservation (Chapter 4 and 5) reveals that in the 1956 Act, *landslag* referred to the natural environment where human impact had been kept to a minimum. The concept also connoted a visual perception of the land, which was considered to be valuable. Implicit in the *landslag* discourse was furthermore an aesthetic evaluation.

Similarities with the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* are obvious.

From the early 1970s nature conservation developed in close relations with the science of ecology. This entailed emphasis put on scientific reasoning and methodology. Although ecology *per se* did not influence the concept of *landslag* itself, regarding objects of reference, the scientific reasoning demanded objectivist approach to nature based on research, which was to influence the way *landslag* should/could/would be dealt with. In the late 1970s a new meaning of *landslag* started to emerge. For the purpose of distinguishing between this and the culturally embedded meaning, I temporarily refer to it here as the ‘technical meaning of *landslag*’.

The technical meaning of *landslag*, hence, builds on the culturally embedded meaning. It evolved in a dynamic way during the few decades since it first emerged. The first evidence of the technical meaning was when *landslag* itself became an object of reference, instead of being part of human-nature relations. This was in 1978, shortly after Preusser (1976) had published *The Landscapes of Iceland: Types and Regions*, and in the same year the IUCN first published their Protected Area Categories, one of which was ‘Protected landscape’ (Dudley, 2008). Both these works indeed show an areal understanding of landscape. Thus, while the influence of scientific reasoning emanated from the Icelandic authorities in nature conservation, the solution to the problem of fitting *landslag* into the new conservation rationale was sought to discourses of other linguistic communities, both in academia and conservation, which conceptualised landscape differently. This development has continued. In the 1990s the technical meaning of *landslag* sought its inspiration from the discourse of cultural landscapes, which was growing rapidly at the time in Europe. For the last few years, the European Landscape Convention has greatly influenced the discourse (see Section 6.2).

Initially the *landslag* area, described by the technical meaning, was defined by its visual appearance and beauty. This gradually changed and the conceptualisation of *landslag* slowly became more objective. References to the beauty of *landslag* vanished and instead the *landslag* area became defined by features of the physical nature and was even equated with natural formations. In the early years of the first decade of this century, the visual appearance of natural landforms comes to define the *landslag* area, along with visual features of land such as shape, texture and colour.

The technical meaning of *landslag* thus carries ontological and epistemological connotations different from the culturally embedded meaning. Conceptualising *landslag* as an area that is demarcated and identified by natural features only, is based on an

understanding which sees the human subject to be irrelevant. Even when *landslag* in these terms is studied by its visual features, to which the human eye is essential, the human is still unrelated to the existence of such *landslag*.

However, the technical meaning did not replace the culturally embedded meaning in the conservation discourse. The two have existed side by side and both are discernible in the 1999 Act on Nature Conservation, upon which the experts based their work when they prepared the first Nature Conservation Strategy. With this context in mind, the confusing conceptualisation among the experts, discussed at the outset of this section and in Paper I, becomes understandable. Conflicts between the two different meanings of *landslag* unfolded when a new method was designed for identifying and selecting conservation areas; a method based on scientific reasoning, which was supposed to base the identification partly on *landslag*. Had the technical meaning of *landslag* wholly replaced the culturally embedded meaning, perhaps these conflicts would not have arisen. But the culturally embedded meaning is exactly what the label implies; culturally embedded. And as such it was also part of the experts' own conceptualisation of *landslag*.

6.2 On definitions of the concept of *landslag*

Since the first serious attempt was made in the beginning of this century to subject *landslag* to methodologies designed for selecting potential conservation areas in Iceland, experts in conservation have called for a definition of *landslag* in Icelandic legislation. Not just a definition, however, but *the* definition of landscape that is provided in the European Landscape Convention. By its nature this definition is very wide and open to all sorts of interpretation. This is because it is expected to subsume all the different notions of landscape in the widest possible interpretations within the Convention's territorial area, as pointed out by Jones and Stenseke (2011a). During this time, different versions have been produced in Icelandic (table 1), that are found in legal documents. The variety confirms that translation is always and simultaneously interpretation²⁴ (Ricoeur, 1971). Apparently the words 'as perceived by people' have particularly given rise to different interpretations of what is perceived, how it is perceived, and who perceives what. Two of these versions are now legal definitions of *landslag* and these I will discuss.

As already noted, the definition of *landslag* provided in the Planning Act no. 123/2010 is a strange and selective mixture of the definition of landscape found in the 1st article of the ELC, partly based on the translation offered by the Planning Agency, and the 2nd article of the ELC, which describes the scope of the Convention, with some add-ons that possibly were intended to emphasise specific features of Icelandic *landslag*.

²⁴ It may appear contradictory to discuss the limitations of translations, and at the same time present my own translations of the Icelandic versions. Given the context, I have no other choice for discussing this; the thesis is written in English. I have therefore attempted to keep my translations as literal as possible. The Icelandic versions are also provided for readers in Icelandic.

Table 1 Various versions of the definition of landslag offered in legal documents, based on the definition of landscape from the ELC

ELC (Council of Europe, 2000a, art. 1, §a)	"Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.	
	English version, my literal translation	Original version in Icelandic
Official translation (Council of Europe, 2000c, art.1, §a)	<i>Landslag</i> means an area that shows signs of in people's perception to have come into being by means of nature and/or with human intervention.	Landslag þýðir svæði sem ber það með sér í skynjun fólks að vera til orðið af náttúrunnar hendi og/eða með mannlegri íhlutun.
Memorandum (Gunnarsson et al., 2004, 3)	<i>Landslag</i> is an area that people perceive to have a specific character, which is the result of the action or interaction of natural and/or human factors.	Landslag er svæði sem fólk skynjar að hafi ákveðin einkenni sem eru tilkomin vegna virkni eða samspils náttúrulegra og/eða mannlegra þátta.
Suggestion from the Planning Agency (Skipulagsstofnun, 2010)	<i>Landslag</i> means an area, as perceived by the public, which has appearance and character because of natural and/or human-made factors and interaction between them.	Landslag merkir svæði, eins og almenningur skynjar það, sem hefur ásýnd og einkenni vegna náttúrulegra og/eða manngerðra þátta og samspili [<i>sic</i>] þar á milli.
Suggestion from FÍLA (Félag íslenskra landslagsarkitekta, 2010)	<i>Landslag</i> means an area, which people see and has acquired its appearance and character because of the interaction between natural and/or human factors.	Landslag merkir svæði sem fólk sér og fengið hefur ásýnd og einkenni vegna samspils náttúrulegra og/eða mannlegra þátta.
(The Planning Act no. 123/2010, art.2, §13)	<i>Landslag</i> means an area which has appearance and character because of natural and/or human-made factors and interaction between them. <i>Landslag</i> thus applies to the everyday environment, environment with conservation value, and degraded environment. <i>Landslag</i> includes, inter alia, urban areas, rural areas, wilderness, rivers, lakes, and marine areas.	Landslag merkir svæði sem hefur ásýnd og einkenni vegna náttúrulegra og/eða manngerðra þátta og samspils þar á milli. Landslag tekur þannig til daglegs umhverfis, umhverfis með verndargildi og umhverfis sem hefur verið raskað. Undir landslag fellur m.a. þéttbýli, dreifbýli, ósnortin víðerni, ár, vötn og hafsvæði.
(The Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013, art.5, §12)	<i>Landslag</i> : An area that people perceive to have a specific character, which is the result of the action or interaction of natural and/or human factors.	<i>Landslag</i> : Svæði sem fólk skynjar að hafi ákveðin einkenni sem eru tilkomin vegna virkni eða samspils náttúrulegra og/eða mannlegra þátta.

First to be noticed is the disregard of ‘people’ in the Planning Act version. It is important to note here that ‘people’ in the ELC definition has wide-ranging meanings and connotations (Jones & Stenseke, 2011a). The word stands for diverse groups of people: the general public as well as politicians and scientists. It denotes local inhabitants as well as visitors; landowners as well as land users and land managers. The ELC furthermore emphasises that the values assigned to landscape by all interested parties have to be taken into account (Council of Europe, 2000a). The quality of landscapes is recognised to some extent as having “to do with the feelings aroused in the [people] by contemplating the landscape” (Council of Europe, 2000b, § 21). The conception of landscape in the ELC, then, entails the recognition of landscape “as a precondition for individual and social well-being” (Council of Europe, 2008, § 1.2.). By excluding the ‘people’ in this Icelandic version, these connotations inherent in the ELC are also ignored.

Second to be noticed is the substitute of ‘appearance’ for ‘as perceived by people’. Appearance – the way that someone or something looks, is here a reductive interpretation of perception, which conversely implies awareness of something through the senses, whether it be sight, smell, hearing, taste or touch. In addition to sensory perception, the ELC speaks also of emotional perception, integral to the definition of landscape (Council of Europe, 2008). Since the ‘people’ are not mentioned, this may suggest a reading of ‘appearance’ as relating primarily to the look of the physical features of *landslag*, which may underpin an objectivist approach to *landslag*. Regarding this, the ELC notes that its definition of landscape differs from conventional definitions that see landscape either as cultural or natural and as part of physical space. Conversely the ELC seeks to confront the quality of the surroundings where people live (Council of Europe, 2008). Sensory factors and emotional perception is therefore very important in the context of the ELC.

Third to be noticed are the different environments to which *landslag* is expected to apply. As already noted, this is based on the 2nd article of the ELC, which does not describe landscape, but the scope of the Convention. Comparison between the latter part of this Icelandic version and the themes identified in one of my studies of the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* (Paper IV) reveals that the main difference lies in to what extent human agency can be accepted as being constitutive of *landslag*. Whereas the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* implies that *landslag* cannot be human-made, the legal definition accepts human input to *landslag*, saying that appearance and character of *landslag* are “the result of natural and/or human factors”. Consequently the definition states that *landslag* ‘applies to the everyday environment, environment with conservation value, and degraded environment’. My study conversely revealed that since ‘environment’ is a human-centred concept, and can accordingly be applied to all kinds of surroundings, it is incompatible with *landslag* (Paper IV). Therefore the notion of ‘everyday environment’ contradicts the culturally embedded meaning. The ‘degraded environment’ is also problematic, as one of the characteristics of the culturally embedded meaning is ‘purity’. Finally, the definition concludes by stating: ‘*Landslag* includes, inter alia, urban areas, rural areas, wilderness, rivers, lakes, and marine areas’. Again this partially contradicts the culturally embedded meaning; being essentially natural, *landslag* does not include urban areas. But similarities with the technical meaning of *landslag* are evident, where *landslag* is defined as an area and objects of nature are listed.

Hence, the legal definition found in the Planning Act expands on the material features of *landslag* far beyond its common cultural conception. It encompasses human agency as creative of its look and character, whereas the sensuous human being who appears in the culturally embedded meaning, as co-constitutive of the *landslag* experience, is absent. Consequently, emotional values, such as aesthetic appreciation, are ignored. The outcome reads as an objectification, in line with dualist ontology.

As for the definition of *landslag* found in the recent Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013, it clearly does not suffer the same limitations: This version includes the ‘people’ and leaves out the scope of the Convention. However, this translation is still somewhat interpretative and selective in some very important aspects, I argue, although the difference is very subtle:

Where the ELC definition says ‘landscape means an area, as perceived by people’ it suggests that the landscape area is contingent upon people’s perception, while its character is given to be the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. The Icelandic version in the 2013 Act conversely relates people’s perception to the character of the *landslag* only, but not the *landslag* area as such: ‘An area that people perceive to have a specific character, which is ...’ What is more, there is no contingency involved. There is nothing that actually clarifies what separates *landslag* from other areas, for what area does not have a character, which is the result of the action or (and) interaction of natural and/or human factors? This applies also to the definition of the Planning Act. The contingency implicit in the ELC definition with the ‘as perceived’, suggests that the identification of the *landslag* area depends upon people’s perception. This Icelandic version offers no such connotations or indications whatsoever about how to identify the *landslag* area. Very subtle difference indeed, but it begs the questions: How does the *landslag* area differ from other areas? How is the *landslag* area identified? And by whom? Regarding this, it might be relevant to point out that with the ELC “official landscape activities can no longer be allowed to be an exclusive field of study or action monopolised by specialist scientific and technical bodies” (Council of Europe, 2000b).

With the adoption of a legal definition of *landslag*, both in the Planning Act and the Nature Conservation Act, the technical meaning of *landslag* has partly been crystallised in legislation: *Landslag* is now legally defined as an area. The question still remains whether these two definitions actually serve the central purpose they were meant for. For example, on the basis of either of the two definitions can *landslag* be categorised? This was one of the reasons the experts called for a definition (see Paper I). It appears somewhat difficult, since both definitions lack all contingency, as discussed above. Also, according to both definitions, *landslag* can be just about anything. A categorisation of *landslag* would need to build on premises that are not provided in the two definitions.

Another question that can be posed, and which relates to this, is whether the classification of *landslag* that has already been started (see Section 2.4) is actually based on principles of the ELC. For example does it involve the sensory and emotional perception of ‘people’, implying not only people of science but also the general public, whether it be local inhabitants or visitors? The authors of this particular project assert that they have taken notice of terms such as ‘area’, ‘perception’, ‘character’, and ‘interaction’, in the spirit of the ELC definition (Þórhallsdóttir et al., 2010). Sensory perception, however, was reduced to visual perception, while emotional perception was methodically excluded. The notion of

the ‘people’ and its various implications did thus not really inform the project, in my judgement. The authors do acknowledge the absence of any assessment of the aesthetic and emotional value of *landslag*, and explain this with the lack of funding: a second half of the project was supposed to grapple with this. Of course, a half-completed project of this sort cannot be expected to do justice to all the principles of the Convention. Arguably however, if a research project of the kind is not fully cognisant of the important implications of the words – ‘as perceived by people’ – it does not really rely on the ELC definition of landscape. At least the ELC definition was not a necessary provision for the project.

A third question is whether the definition of *landslag* in the Act on Nature Conservation actually clarifies what is meant when the word is used in the Act? As previously discussed (Section 5.5), the concept of *landslag* appears in different context in the 2013 Act, and apparently in two different meanings as well. It is used in three of the categories for protection. In the case of the categories of ‘national parks’ and ‘uninhabited wilderness’, the definition of *landslag* provided in the Act does not clarify its meaning there. For example the areal connotation, does it shed light on the issue here? In the case of both categories, the protected area is already defined in terms other than *landslag*. Does the mentioning of a specific character, which in the case of both categories, would be resulting from natural factors, explain why the word *landslag* is used? If this would be the case, then arguably it would suffice to use the word character. *Landslag*, however, appears to imply something more. In the case of the third category for protection, the ‘*landslag* conservation area’ it is not really clear whether it refers to cultural *landslag*, as indicated with its relation to the IUCN category V, or natural *landslag*, because *landslag* in Iceland is ‘generally more related to geological phenomena and processes’. The definition of *landslag* is not very helpful here; it can be either. Neither is it helpful for clarifying why the aesthetic value of *landslag* is mentioned only in the case of the ‘*landslag* conservation area’, which leads to the irrational conclusion that an aesthetic value may be relevant only when the *landslag* is cultural. In short, the definition of *landslag* in the 2013 Act on Nature Conservation does not really help to clarify the meaning of the word when it is used in the Act.

With the 2013 Act, some important steps have been taken with regard to the concept of *landslag* and its place in nature conservation. The concept has been defined, in line with wishes from within conservation circles. Aesthetic value has been recognised as part of *landslag*, to some limited extent at least. Still this definition of *landslag* appears to not fully serve the purpose for which it was meant. This is actually not surprising, given the wide and open meaning of the ELC definition. This leads to the conclusion that instead of incorporating this European cultural diversity – albeit implicitly – in the Nature Conservation Act, perhaps it would turn out to be more useful to define *landslag* on its own merits so that it actually clarifies what is being referred to when the word is used. Possibly my studies of the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* could provide a basis towards such a definition.

It is clear, however, that within conservation circles in Iceland, there is a will to protect cultural landscapes, which is in my opinion very positive and long overdue. But rather than stretching the definition of *landslag* to include every possible notion of landscape, perhaps it would be simpler to add a definition of *menningarlandslag* (cultural landscape) to the Nature Conservation Act and other relevant laws, and thus firmly connect with the international discourse of cultural landscapes. Definitions of the two concepts, however,

would need to clarify their internal relations. Linguistically they are related: *menningarlandslag* is a compound word made up of *landslag*. Ontologically, however, they differ as previously argued: the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* has spatial connotations, while the technical meaning has areal connotations, as does the *menningarlandslag*. How the natural *landslag* and the cultural *landslag* relate to each of the definitions would also need to be clarified.

6.3 On the value of the concept of *landslag*

The appreciation of beauty in nature is deeply rooted in Icelandic culture (as probably in any other culture) and it has been integral to the conservation rationale of the Icelandic legislative discourse from the enactment of the first general law in 1956. This is clearly discernible in the first version of the Nature Conservation Act. Notions of beauty, however, were gradually undermined as scientific rationalities grew stronger in conservation from the 1970s to the turn of the century. Scientific reasoning may possibly have reached its peak in the first years of the 21st century, although it may be too early to say. In 2005 when I interviewed the experts in conservation to learn about their work and perspectives with regard to the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy, one of them said:

There is no point in us sending a formal proposal to the Minister or to the Agency, about protecting some site because we think it is beautiful. They would just laugh at us. (See also Paper I)

This remark I take not to represent the personal view of this individual, but the prevailing conservation rationality at the time, and an acknowledgement thereof, legitimated by knowledge which was accepted as truth. This quote indeed reflects very well how power is exercised and performed within the discourse of truth. Probably this person was right about the laughter: At about the same time I attended a conference relating to nature conservation and witnessed indeed how a subjective issue – the sheer enjoyment of being in nature and corresponding mental health benefits – was tactically ridiculed and used to produce amusement among the audience, for the purpose of legitimating the objective reasoning being presented. Six years later, in 2011, at a conference where the White Paper on nature conservation was presented, I witnessed the former interviewee of mine talk about various values of nature that formed the basis of nature conservation. To my surprise the aesthetic value of nature was included in the list. And yet nobody laughed.

It seems that the trend has slowly been reversed and balance is being sought. Possibly this may be explained to some extent by influence of the ELC. Aesthetic value has now been confirmed in legislation as an important attribute of *landslag*, although the legislators apparently are cautious enough not to speak of *beautiful landslag*.

Regarding the value of the *landslag* concept, it is worth noting that there are a few words in the Nature Conservation Act that are used to signify the natural environment. They include: nature, land, environment, *landslag*, habitat, ecosystem, biological diversity, wilderness, etc. Of these concepts, *landslag* is the only one that intertwines in its meaning the human subject and nature (where nature stands for the physical world). *Landslag* thus denotes simultaneously the materiality of nature, the visual perception of it, and the experience felt

within the subject, often described as an experience of beauty and well-being. While this attribute of the *landslag* concept may prove to be hard to work with, particularly with methods of the natural sciences, it is still its greatest quality; that which is of most value for nature conservation. Hence, if the experience of beauty in nature is considered to be valuable at all and worth protecting, then the concept of *landslag* should ideally be used to address such an issue. But for this to happen, we need to dare to talk about beauty and other matters that give emotional value to our lives (cf. Benediktsson 2007).

Reducing the concept of *landslag* to signify the mere materiality of nature means that the concept is deprived of its greatest quality. Even reducing the concept in conservation practices to merely denote the appearance of nature means that the concept is not used to its fullest extent.

Finally, it is also worth noting that nature conservation as social activity does not take place in a cultural void, but is rather part and parcel of Icelandic culture and relates to different spheres of Icelandic society. Nature conservation and conservation practices are thus a matter of concern to the general public. This implies the obvious fact that the achievements of nature conservation are for the benefit to the people of Iceland, and beyond²⁵. But what I want to emphasise here is that this also implies responsibility of experts and nature conservation authorities towards Icelandic culture and society.

As stated in the European Landscape Convention it is complementary to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972). Cultural heritage here is understood in a physical sense as tangible works, buildings, monuments, and sites etc. which bear witness to the work of humans. The value of *landslag* in terms of cultural heritage, however, may also be understood in less tangible sense, i.e. with a reference to *landslag* being a verbal expression and a concept. As such it may be of relevance to another UNESCO convention, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (cf. Jones & Stenseke, 2011a). Cultural diversity here “refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression” (UNESCO, 2005, art.4, §1). The Convention recognises “that the diversity of cultural expressions, including traditional cultural expressions, is an important factor that allows individuals and peoples to express and to share with others their ideas and values”. It furthermore recalls “that linguistic diversity is a fundamental element of cultural diversity” (UNESCO, 2005).

The meaning of the *landslag* concept is not merely culturally embedded in the Icelandic language, but embodies a part of Icelandic culture, by framing and expressing a human–nature relationship that people in Iceland seem to hold dear. The meaning of the concept of *landslag*, hence, has a cultural value that needs to be acknowledged. Shunning the culturally embedded meaning in nature conservation practices might dilute the meaning of *landslag* and thus, in time, risk the impoverishment of language and culture.

²⁵ This paragraph discusses the relations between nature conservation and culture/society. The declaration that nature conservation is for the benefit to people does not imply disposition to nature conservation based on anthropocentrism only. I see the benefits of nature conservation also to be to nature, whether it is the inanimate nature, biotic nature, or ecosystem.

The current phase in Icelandic nature conservation appears to have something in common with the period when the English landscape concept was being adopted as a technical term in geographical thought and writing, based on the areal meaning of the German *Landschaft* (see Section 2.1). At the time geographer Richard Hartshorne argued against the implementation of the landscape concept because, in his opinion, “to destroy the relative clarity of common English usage ... would be little short of a scientific crime” (Hartshorne 1939, 327). Dismissing the concept of *landslag* in nature conservation is in my opinion not a good solution though, for as discussed above, the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* is most valuable for nature conservation that wishes to take aesthetic appreciation of land seriously. Rather, the conservation rationale should be amended to embrace this meaning of *landslag* for the benefit of nature conservation and culture more generally.

PART TWO

PAPERS

I Performing expertise: Landscape, governmentality and conservation planning in Iceland²⁶

Introduction

For conservation planners, the concept of landscape has proved somewhat difficult to work with, owing to its plethora of meanings. Landscape is in many ways a unique concept as it 'refers to both the thing itself and its description' (Minca, 2007, p. 179). Thus, landscape is at once a morphological reality (Sauer, 1925/ 1996) and a culturally constructed representation laden with symbolic meanings (Cosgrove, 1984; Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988). It is furthermore a contested political arena (Mitchell, 1996) and a territory defined by custom, culture and law (Olwig, 1996). The landscape concept has also been invoked in ecological analysis, giving rise to the field of landscape ecology (cf. Wiens et al., 2007), which has been important in the conservation discourse. Terms such as biodiversity, with an explicit natural science content, have however assumed a leading role in conservation, not least through methodological advances in conservation biology and landscape ecology.

Yet, despite its conceptual and hence methodological complexity, landscape is becoming prominent as well in conservation planning and management, for example, in the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000a). It seems to capture popular concerns about the state of the environment, which cannot be fully apprehended by the concept of biodiversity. The question we want to ask concerns the relation between these two concepts: landscape and biodiversity. Can landscape be turned into a useful tool for conservation through methodologies designed for the systematic protection of biodiversity? This paper addresses this question through a detailed study of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland. The analysis is centred on three theoretical constructs: governmentality, performance and expertise.

Internationally, nature conservation has been going through considerable changes since the early 1970s as its ethical basis has slowly been amended (Gillespie, 1997). Although still dominated by an anthropocentric position, where the underlying premise for conservation is the instrumental value attributed to nature by humans, nature conservation policies are gradually putting more emphasis on intrinsic values of the natural environment. The convention on biological diversity (CBD), for example, stresses at its very beginning 'the intrinsic value of biological diversity' (United Nations, 1992, preamble). It is noted that the

²⁶ This paper is co-authored with Karl Benediktsson. It has previously been published as a research article. Please consult the original publication for citation:
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conservation of biological diversity will only be achieved by conserving ecosystems and natural habitats. At face value, this implies that both organisms and their non-living environment should be evaluated on their own terms. However, as Takacs (1996) has demonstrated, the concept of biodiversity is thoroughly normative and political. It is not a neutral, scientific term, but purposefully designed to highlight the conflict between the destruction and the preservation of nature. It is thus laden with a moral purpose (cf. Bowker, 2005). Critics such as Escobar (1996) and Castree (2003) have moreover argued that the emphasis on ecological values in biodiversity conservation represents a postmodern form of capitalization of nature and is thus not really about intrinsic values, but rather utilitarian ones.

The foregrounding of ecological considerations, however, is clearly identifiable. Several international conventions that preceded the CBD, such as those of Ramsar (United Nations, 1971), Bern (Council of Europe, 1979), and Bonn (United Nations, 1979), indicate this shift. In Europe, these initiatives resulted in changes in the designation of protected areas (Bennett & Ligthart, 2001). In 1989, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention decided to develop a network of conservation areas (Council of Europe, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). Although the network was not formed at the time, the European Union (EU) subsequently issued the Habitat Directive (Council of the European Communities, 1992), which together with the Birds Directive (Council of the European Communities, 1979) provide the foundation of Natura 2000, the ecological network of conservation areas within the EU. According to its methodology, sites included in the network should be selected strictly on grounds of biological and ecological considerations (Rosa & Da Silva, 2005). In 1996, the Council of Europe finally launched a network of conservation areas: the Emerald Network. Evidently, the Emerald Network benefited greatly from Natura 2000 and is in fact seen as an extension of it to European countries outside the EU. Envisioning nature as network stresses interplay between nature's diverse elements and also connections between otherwise defined entities in space. Such envisioning therefore diverges from the traditional view of areas worthy of protection as 'islands' or 'sanctuaries'. Rather, protected areas are seen as interconnected representatives of a larger whole.

The emphasis on ecological considerations in Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network does not, however, necessarily indicate a non-anthropocentric ethical basis. Rosa & Da Silva (2005) have argued that despite the biological and ecological prominence, the underlying ethic of Natura 2000 is weakly anthropocentric. This is because the main emphasis is on the preservation and management of sites in a sustainable manner, so that a representative sample of species and ecosystems will be ensured for present and future human generations. Human needs and interests thus guide the nature conservation policy measures of Natura 2000, although they focus on values of the natural environment.

This shift towards the foregrounding of non-anthropocentric values, notwithstanding its ethical basis, has to some extent led to instrumental values being deliberately sidelined. Understood aesthetically, landscape has been considered by many conservationists to fall into this category, as it is supposedly based on human perception only, but not on nature's own intrinsic qualities. The problem associated with the relativity of aesthetic appreciation has caused many in conservation planning to turn away from it as a criterion for nature conservation (Gillespie, 1997). This indeed seems to be the case in Iceland.

In 2003, Iceland's first Nature Conservation Strategy was adopted by Alþingi (the Icelandic Parliament). The methodology developed for the strategy was guided by the ideal of systematic protection of biodiversity. Although an attempt was made towards a systematic evaluation of landscape for the purpose of nature conservation in the strategy, an analysis of the preparatory process revealed several complications in this regard. Some were practical, relating to the budget and timeframe for the preparation of the first strategy. Others and no less important complications were theoretical, concerning the conceptualization of landscape and the integration of landscape and biodiversity conservation.

The analysis presented here is the result of a qualitative case study of the preparation of the Nature Conservation Strategy. In addition to official documents regarding the strategy itself, interviews were conducted with nine of the main contributors to the strategy, all experts in nature conservation. Seven of these were male and two female. Eight held a degree in biology and one in geology. The interviewees were either staff members or external consultants of the three governmental bodies responsible for the strategy: The Ministry for the Environment, the Environment and Food Agency of Iceland (hereafter UST, *Umhverfisstofnun*)²⁷ and the Icelandic Institute of Natural History (NI, *Náttúrufræðistofnun Íslands*). The latter two are under the auspices of the ministry. NI carries out basic research on Icelandic nature and maintains inventories about the natural heritage, while UST has a more administrative role, as it is responsible for implementing conservation projects and managing conservation areas.

The interviews took place from August 2005 to February 2006 and were conducted by one of the authors, Edda R.H. Waage. The interviews were semistructured (cf. Kvale, 1996) and flowed freely within a frame set by the interviewer. The interviewees were asked to describe their involvement in the preparation process and evaluate the process and its outcome. Landscape issues in relation to the strategy were discussed along with the methodology employed in its preparation. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. On the whole, the research was guided by Foucauldian-inspired discourse analytics (Sharp & Richardson, 2001), and as suggested in the Grounded Theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), analysis of the data started simultaneously with its gathering through open coding where all relevant concepts and categories were identified. Further analysis consisted of axial coding, where major categories were related, as well as detailed analysis of discursive utterances (Gill, 2000) in order to deepen understanding of certain themes.

The paper proceeds with an explication of the theoretical constructs mentioned above, which provides the basis for the analysis. The preparatory process of the Nature Conservation Strategy 2004–2008 is then described, followed by an analysis of the problems encountered by the experts involved. Their conceptualization of landscape is then examined in detail in order to get a better understanding of what we call the experts'

²⁷ UST was founded in 2003 with a merger of six governmental bodies. One of these was the Nature Conservation Agency, which was responsible for conservation matters, including the preparation of the Nature Conservation Strategy. For the purpose of simplification, we will always refer to UST in this paper, even when referring to its predecessor.

dilemma, namely, the seemingly incompatible ontologies underlying the concept of landscape and biodiversity conservation.

Governmentality and the performing expert

The concepts of both governmentality and performance presuppose a reality that is socially constructed and therefore call attention to humans situated in and engaging with a 'world of meaning' (Crotty, 1998). Although these concepts emphasize different aspects and have traditionally been used separately (Agrawal, 2005; Bial, 2004; Burchell et al., 1991; Szerszynski et al., 2003b), we argue that they can be usefully employed together. We will now briefly outline each of them and then discuss how they can be brought together for our purposes.

Governmentality

The concept of 'governmentality' constitutes the basis for the analytical framework. This Foucauldian neologism, also referred to by Foucault as 'governmental rationality' (Gordon, 1991) relies on the conception of 'government' as 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1982/2001, p. 341). Foucault here elaborates on the equivocal nature of the term 'conduct': it can be either a verb, meaning the process involved in leading, directing or guiding something, or a noun, relating to behaviour, action or comportment (Dean, 1999). To govern is thus 'to structure the possible fields of action of others' (Foucault, 1982/2001, p. 341) and as such connotes the exercise of power. 'Freedom' is an important element in this context as power is exercised only over free subjects. Government in Foucauldian terms is thus also defined as the 'management of possibilities' (Foucault, 1982/2001, p. 341). Noticeably, this conceptualization of government implies a much more fluid situation than that envisaged by the usual understanding of the term. Instead of pre-given structures of governmental power, set within the framework of the state and its apparatus, the processes of government involve a complex meld of actors, techniques and mentalities by which power is continually constructed (Foucault, 1980). Power may indeed be understood as 'a set of reversible relationships' and governmentality as 'a strategic field of power relations' (Foucault, 2005, p. 252).

The term governmentality thus shares some basic characteristics with the term governance. Although emphasizing different aspects, both terms represent an effort to investigate political power in terms other than that of the state. 'Governance' has been put to multiple uses, but as Rose (1999) has pointed out, in specialized literature it often evokes two specific themes: normative and descriptive. The former means that governance is judged to be either good or bad depending on how much the state intervenes in political, social or economic affairs. Less state involvement thus translates into better governance in this formulation. The latter simply accounts for the structure of power relations without any normative assumptions: the sociology of governance. Governmentality, on the other hand, is neither normative nor descriptive, but 'diagnostic' (Rose, 1999). As such, studies of governmentality are concerned with the emergence of particular 'regimes of truth' and the relations between knowledge and power therein.

Dean (2007) has pointed out that to some extent studies in governmentality are descriptive, although what they describe is not governing as such, but our thinking and imagination about governing. Elsewhere he has noted that the concept of governmentality deals with 'how we think about governing with different mentalities of government' (Dean, 1999, p. 16). The idea of mentalities of government emphasizes that the thought integral to practices of government is often taken for granted, not least by the practitioners themselves. When government is based on conscious calculation and knowledge, involving organized practices, we can talk of the 'art of government'. Such government requires crafts, skills, knowledge, etc. Thus, the analysis of government through the concept of governmentality is 'a study of organized practices through which we are governed and through which we govern ourselves' (Dean, 1999, p. 18). The practices by those who govern are what we are concerned with here and in particular the thought integrated in those practices.

Performance

The concept of performance came into social science mainly through the work of Goffman (1959/1990). As pointed out by Szerszynski et al. (2003a), the term has many shades of meaning depending on the context in which it is being used. Still, one can say that performance generally refers to an act: what individuals 'do, say, "act-out"' (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 434). In other words, performance denotes that something is done. For Carlson (2004), performance is a conscious act upon which the actor reflects. Hymes (cited in Carlson, 2004, p. 12) defines performance as a subset within conduct, involving 'a responsibility to an audience and to tradition'. According to this understanding, and in line with Goffman's original formulation, performance is thus a conduct performed in front of an audience, which other types of conduct are not necessarily. It involves ritualistic aspects (Goffman, 1959/1990), which implies that it is a repeated act, albeit an act that is never totally replicated (cf. Lorimer & Lund, 2003).

Performativity is a related concept, which refers to 'citational practices' (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 434), or 'language that does something' besides being representational, but also to 'phenomena that exist only in the doing of them' (Szerszynski et al., 2003a, p. 2–3; see also Austin, 1962/2004). Performativity can be seen as a practice or process that is tantamount to performance besides 'enabl[ing] and disciplin[ing] subjects and their performances' (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 434).

With the recent turn to relational ontology (Latour, 1993; Massey, 2005; Thrift, 1999; Whatmore, 2002) has come a recognition that performances are not merely the result of conscious acts nor indeed of human agency alone. For instance, non-representational theory 'emphasizes the flow of practice in everyday life as embodied, caught up with and committed to the creation of affect, contextual and inevitably technologized through language and objects' (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p. 415). Indeed both performance and performativity highlight the significance of affects on human life (Thrift, 2003a). This broadens the view of performances beyond conscious acts. Affect emerges through the directness of bodily relations and should not be equated with emotions that are produced afterwards. It is 'more-than-rational' (Wylie, 2007, p. 214) and enters into all facets of human activity including science, which directs attention to performances as particular realizations of innumerable possibilities.

A relational approach also allows for non-human, or more-than-human, agency (Cloke & Perkins, 2005; Eden et al., 2000; Jones & Cloke, 2002; Lorimer, 2007; Marvin, 2003; Whatmore, 2002). This takes the performance concept even further from the conscious (human) acts, highlighted by Carlson (2004). Animate and inanimate nature becomes a co-constituent of performances that result from the affects emerging from the encounters between actors in assemblages that are unmistakably hybrid. Performance can thus be seen as the 'manifestation of agency and the action through which agency and creativity emerge' (Szerszynski et al., 2003a, p. 3).

The concepts of governmentality and performance are both centred on practices. They both highlight the fact that no act is inevitable, at least not in the exact form it takes, and are therefore useful for critically probing taken-for-granted truths and realities. The two concepts enrich and add to each other in several ways. Governmentality directs attention to the inseparability of power and knowledge, whereas performance emphasizes the ritual aspects of conduct; how acts result from creative moments of affect as well as reasoning and how particular realities exist only by means of particular practices.

The performance of the expert

The practices of those who govern are central to the production of knowledge and truth. The art of government relies upon experts for much of its effectiveness. The term is usually taken to mean those who have specialized training or knowledge in a particular area, those who possess expertise. Until the 1970s, the concept of expertise remained largely unproblematized (Collins & Evans, 2002). The expert was considered to have a privileged access to objective truth through his/her adoption of standardized methodologies of science. With social constructionism gaining ground, the boundaries between expert and lay knowledge were destabilized. Science itself became to be understood as a social activity. This, however, opened the door to relativism and a general scepticism towards the role of scientific authority in public decision making (Collins & Evans, 2002; Demeritt, 2002; Latour, 1987). As Foucault observed, 'knowledge [is] perspective' (Foucault, 1977/1984, p. 90). Scientific knowledge does not symbolize some absolute truth, but is the result of a selective scientific inquiry. Truth is thus constructed by knowledge, but is linked with power in a circular relation: the 'régime of truth'. Accordingly, production of truth only becomes possible through power and power is exercised through a certain discourse of truth. Furthermore, the 'régime of truth' brings about certain 'rules of right', which in turn is formative for the power relations (Foucault, 1980). Expert practices are thus performative; they are conditioned by the very discourse they help to create and sustain.

The way by which the status of expertise is acquired has also been reconsidered. Collins & Evans (2002) have pointed out that the category of experts must be broadened to include those who have gained their expertise through experience as well as formal qualifications. Milton (2002) has stressed that experience of the human and non-human world is individual and that diversity in worldly experience results in different perceptions, knowledges and understandings of the world. She further argues that emotions are important in the process of learning about the world as they both influence our interests and affect our memory. According to Milton, emotions are the essence of motivation and as such crucial for any rational thinking. For Latour (2004, p. 206), it is through the body that

we ‘learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of’. Experience is thus bodily; the expert has to ‘learn to be affected’ as Latour puts it.

When new problems that have been of marginal interest to the scientific community are being brought into the sphere of government, the issue of expertise becomes critical. The prevailing governmental rationality assumes that in order to legitimate the power of government, objective truths by means of scientific methods are required. Such truths, however, may be hard to establish when no consensus has developed among scientific practitioners. Often the solution has been to bring in experts from other fields; to transfer methodologies from one field of science to the other. In such cases, their practises are legitimated by formal qualifications, but real expertise is not gained until experience has been accumulated. Becoming an expert in a new field is thus a learning process, which is based partly on former practices and knowledge and partly on honing ones’ bodily senses and sensibilities in new ways. The performance of the expert is thus a balancing act where outcomes are by no means certain.

The performativity of data

The performative role of scientific discourse is achieved largely through the construction of theories and databases. ‘The world that is explored scientifically becomes more and more closely tied to the world that can be represented by one’s theories and in one’s databases: and this world is ever more readily recognized as ‘the real world’ (Bowker, 2000, p. 659). Certain techniques for handling these data have assumed paramount importance. Among these are taxonomic classifications, typologies, measurements and calculations (Bowker & Star, 1999; Enticott, 2001; Latour, 1999b; Rose, 1999). These techniques are used to define the object to be governed and are in themselves tools for governing, for instance, to prove impartiality. At the same time, objectification is achieved.

These issues are examined by Lorimer (2006), who has investigated the scope of UK biodiversity conservation. Drawing on actor-network theory, he discusses how biodiversity is framed and realized by an assemblage ‘of people, practices, technologies and other non-humans’ (Lorimer, 2006, p. 540). The biological records that constitute the databases, on which the UK biodiversity action plan is based, are highly partial with some taxonomic groups being favoured, notably birds and vascular plants. Biodiversity experts, as well as the general public, are influenced by what he terms the ‘non-human charisma’ of certain species, whereas other parts of the biota do not enjoy the same attention (Lorimer, 2007). Conservation priorities are thus defined by the truths generated by the knowledge that the biodiversity databases contain, much in the way suggested by Foucault.

The three theoretical constructs—governmentality, performance and expertise— we have now outlined will inform our analysis of the problems encountered by the experts who were responsible for Iceland’s first Nature Conservation Strategy. We will now describe and discuss the process of preparing the strategy.

The Nature Conservation Strategy 2004–2008

Landscape has long featured in nature conservation in Iceland. Ever since the first Nature Conservation Act was passed (Act no. 48/1956), a legal provision has been in place to protect natural areas owing to their ‘special’ landscape. In many conservation designations, the argumentation has centred on aesthetic values in broad terms with no scientific measures used to determine those values. The main policy instrument was the Registry of Sites of Natural Interest (*Náttúruminjasrá*), a list of sites worthy of protection. The registry was last published in 1996, describing 402 sites, 77 of which were already protected (Náttúruverndarráð, 1996a).

The revised Nature Conservation Act, which was passed in 1999 (Act no. 44/ 1999), was supposed to strengthen the scientific base of conservation. The act stipulates that a Nature Conservation Strategy is drawn up every 5 years. The UST is responsible for the preparation of the strategy, in consultation with the NI, as well as with regional nature research centres and local nature conservation committees. The strategy can to a certain extent be regarded as an extension of the Registry of Sites of Natural Interests. It is supposed to include ‘the most relevant information possible’ (art. 66) about sites of natural interests that are either protected already or judged worthy of protection. It also entails a commitment to the development of consistent methods for describing and selecting conservation areas.

The mandatory formulation of a Nature Conservation Strategy was intended to contribute to the implementation of the CBD (United Nations, 1992) in national legislation—Iceland being one of its signatory states. In particular, this provision addressed the eighth paragraph of the convention, which, among other things, requires parties to:

- 1) establish a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity
- 2) develop, where necessary, guidelines for the selection, establishment and management of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity.

Iceland’s commitment to the Bern (Council of Europe, 1979) and the Ramsar (United Nations, 1971) conventions was also reaffirmed with the revised act. All these international agreements contributed to the definition of Icelandic natural heritage described in the act as well as the criteria set for the evaluation of natural heritage in the Nature Conservation Strategy. The act, on the other hand, contains no further details about how the evaluation should be carried out or how the conservation areas were to be selected.

In 2000, the preparation of the first strategy started within the UST. In the beginning, it involved a certain degree of methodological experimentation, not least because of uncertainty within the institution about how to go about the matter. To some extent, therefore, the experts within the UST relied on former practices and experiences from the Registry of Sites of Natural Interests, which entailed general information gathering. However, as the sites had not been selected, the whole country was being considered. Having requested all municipalities and relevant institutions to propose conservation areas and provide information concerning the natural environment, and having received a few

replies, the UST experts found themselves sitting with piles of unorganized and fragmentary documents. In short, they soon faced severe difficulties in preparing the strategy and realized their lack of expertise in facing this new challenge.

The fact that NI was not initially contacted as a consulting body, but as a source for information, may partly explain the difficult situation in which UST initially found itself. Within a year, a preparatory committee was set up with three delegates, one from each of the governmental bodies (UST, NI and the Ministry). The committee's objective was to decide upon the methodological approach. This proved to be unproblematic: NI represents Iceland in the Bern Convention and the institute's Director General had participated in the revision of the Nature Conservation Act. Despite vague instructions in the Act, it turned out that the methodological approach had long before been envisioned, namely, the one used within the Emerald Network.

These first steps in the preparation, which revealed the authority of NI, inevitably set the stage for the work to come. Adopting the methodology from Emerald Network meant taking on board in the strategy the ideological preconception of envisioning nature as a network. NI's methodological initiative implied a certain discourse, a 'regime of truth', which allowed only for scientific knowledge and particular 'rules of right'. Thus, the methodology emphasized the importance of systematically defining, describing and mapping species and habitat types in need of protection in order to secure their conservation in a network of protected areas.

The Preparatory process

Following the work of the preparatory committee, the preparation of the strategy was realigned with the aim of adopting the methodology from the Emerald Network and adjusting it in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act. This required the experts at UST and NI to apply the methodology not only to species and habitat types, but also to other aspects of the natural heritage. Geological formations, for example, are commonly considered very important in Iceland and feature prominently in the act. Financial constraints, however, meant that the strategy would be based on already existing information alone. This limited the procedure considerably as the only comprehensive databases at NI that fitted the methodology were those of birds and plants. It was therefore decided that NI would prepare conservation proposals based on birds and plants, while UST and NI would jointly bring together and organize already existing geological data in order to come up with other proposals.

In 2002, NI delivered a report (Einarsson et al., 2002) containing 40 proposals for conservation sites, which would contribute to the protection of bird and plant species. The institute recommended that emphasis be put on the protection of seven bird species²⁸ and all major bird cliffs in the country. Also, a recommendation was made to protect areas with unique vegetation and many rare and/or red-listed species (Einarsson et al., 2002). The

²⁸ Of these seven bird species, five are species that nest in Iceland: Slavonian grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), greylag goose (*Anser anser*), barrows goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) and white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*). Two are migratory species, brent goose (*Branta bernicia*) and knot (*Calidris canutus islandica*).

selection was primarily based on knowledge about the distribution of these species, and their need for protection, with reference to red lists, rarity, national responsibility and international agreements (Council of Europe, 1979; Náttúrufræðistofnun Íslands, 1996, 2000; The World Conservation Union, 2008; Tucker & Heath, 1994; United Nations, 1979, 1992).

The preparation of the second report, concerning geological formations, turned out to be a bigger challenge. As there are no international agreements or red lists that deal with the protection of geological formations, NI and UST to some extent had to start defining and categorizing them from scratch. However, the institutions had access to considerable expertise in the field and in 2002 they delivered a report containing 19 proposals of geosites (Torfason & Sigurðsson, 2002).

NI also speculated on the future development of the methodology, envisaging the selection of sites in the strategy to be based not only on databases about species and geological formations, but also habitat types (Einarsson et al., 2002). Within NI, nature was thus generally understood as biotic on one hand and geological on the other. Work on the mapping of habitat types had already begun at the institution by the time the proposals were being prepared.

Apart from the proposals described above, UST received a few other proposals from different municipalities, institutes and agencies. UST also proposed some sites itself. All in all, 119 proposals were put up for discussions and comparisons. For this purpose, a consulting team was setup with seven representatives from UST and NI, together with an external consultant. The preparation ended in 2003, when UST handed a final report to the ministry, with 75 proposals for protected areas (Umhverfisstofnun, 2003). The Minister for the Environment subsequently chose 14 areas for the actual strategy, which was then accepted by Alþingi. This last phase is not the focus of this paper, however, but only the preparatory process.

The final report

The proposals from NI, for the protection of bird and plant species (Einarsson et al., 2002), became the backbone of the report the UST handed to the ministry or just over half of all the 75 proposals. The joint proposals from NI and UST of geosites (Torfason & Sigurðsson, 2002) were all added to the final report, constituting a quarter of the total number. Thus, three quarters of all the sites the UST suggested to the ministry were proposed according to the new methodology based on the data from the natural sciences.

A discourse analysis of the interviews at UST and NI revealed a divergence regarding the objective of the first strategy. Overall, the report shows an emphasis on considering various objects of the natural heritage methodically. The methodological emphasis, however, was somewhat more apparent among interviewees at NI than UST. All those interviewed at NI had similar opinions about the correct methodology of conservation planning, notably opinions that were based on comparison with the antecedent Registry of Sites of Natural Interest. Rather than being based on a strong vision of the ‘right’ methods alone, the methodological approach was, at least to some extent, seen as a reversal of the ‘wrong’ and allegedly unscientific methods used before:

The Institute of Natural History has been trying to ... adopt a more scientific approach ... [as] people have abandoned the romantic ideology of protecting landscapes and beautiful places, and instead have adopted a systematic approach where they try to map nature, all natural phenomena and heritage.

This contrast between a 'scientific approach' and a 'romantic ideology' is telling. Basing conservation on 'the romantic' is seen as opening the doors for subjective values where landscapes and the beauty of the places are the main focus, whereas 'the scientific' offers a seemingly objective methodological approach.

Emotions are not acceptable according to this vision of the 'scientific approach'. According to some interviewees at NI, conservation proposals can thus not be based on 'beautiful flower-covered hillsides' or 'beautiful waterfalls' because 'emotions are as different as people are'. Rather, conservation proposals must be based on scientific knowledge and professional reasoning. The Registry's 'romantic approach' allegedly used 'weak reasoning' that was emotionally grounded and thus 'everyone' could propose an area to be listed.

Interestingly, 66 (88%) of the proposals in the final report partially or wholly covered sites that were already listed in the earlier Registry of Sites of Natural Interest. The very places that affected people in the past and were consequently proposed in the registry apparently motivated the natural scientists at NI to collect their data. But, as discussed before, aesthetic reasoning—evident in wordings such as 'beautiful landscape'—was prominent in the registry. In line with Milton's (2002) reasoning, we may assume that these places have produced emotional responses among the scientists and motivated their work. This in turn brings up the role of landscape, or whether it could be seen as co-constituting the expert performances, through its affects. If this is the case, people's interest ultimately plays a decisive part in the selection of conservation areas, despite the objective reasoning demanded by the governmental rationality.

Although the majority of the proposals in the final report were more or less reproductions from other sources, UST co-ordinated them in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act. The report provided summaries of the characteristics of each area, followed by a matrix (Figure 4). Apart from 'scenic value', the common criteria listed in the matrix are those specified in the Nature Conservation Act. The objects on the other hand reveal items classified as natural heritage, all of which are mentioned in the act, that were considered most relevant. This second evaluation of the sites, carried out mostly by the consulting team, was not made in accordance with the new methodology and turned out to function mostly as a description. The interviews revealed that it was based on information at hand and personal knowledge. The matrix is then followed by a detailed listing of the 'key premises' (Umhverfisstofnun, 2003, p. 81), which reflects the original reasons for the site being proposed.

The matrix corresponds to UST's vision of the continued development of the methodology: the selection of sites being based not only on species, geological formations and habitat types, as NI had envisaged, but also on landscape. Moreover, this reflects a broader understanding of nature, containing a subjective character in addition to its biotic and geological features.

Landscape is shown as an important object in no fewer than 59 proposals of the 75 in the final report. For 47 areas, landscape is listed as one of the ‘main objects’ (Umhverfisstofnun, 2003, pp. 84–92). At first sight, this could be taken as an indication that landscape was indeed an important consideration in the selection of the areas, but as we have already indicated, landscape was not seen as a key premise in any of the proposals, but rather as a descriptive add-on. It may also be noted that in the matrices, the object of landscape was matched with the criterion of ‘scenic value’ for all but one of the 59 areas. This hints at the predominantly visual and aesthetic understanding of the landscape concept in Iceland (cf. Benediktsson, 2007).

The common criteria in the matrix takes on a certain kind of performativity when used for determining the object of landscape. Arguably, ideas about landscape in each proposed area are both enabled and disciplined (cf. Gregson & Rose, 2000) by the wording of the criteria. In other words, the ideas of landscape that these criteria produce exist only by the implementation of the criteria.

The evaluation of landscape was inevitably patchy as information about landscape came from dissimilar sources and the knowledge of the areas differed widely among the experts who participated in the consulting team. The institutions were also hampered by the lack of expertise in the field of landscape evaluation. Those criticisms notwithstanding the report show that there is clearly awareness within UST of the importance of taking landscape systematically into consideration when selecting new sites. The agency showed willingness to acquire expertise in a new and unsettled field where the knowledge of certified experts in other fields was found wanting.

Premises for protection, objects and criteria								
		Objects						
		Geological formations	Hydrology	Plants	Animals	Ecosystems, habitat types, habitats	Landscape	Cultural and historic heritage
Common criteria								
Rare species or species in danger of extinction. Rare natural heritage		●		●	●			
Areas unusually rich in number of species or sensitive to disturbance. Particularly diverse natural heritage		●		●		●	●	
Maintenance of stocks or natural evolutionary processes. Continuous, entire or intact natural heritage		●				●	●	●
International conservation value. International responsibility								
Scientific, social, economic or cultural value		●		●			●	●
Characteristic for the natural surroundings of the region concerned		●		●		●	●	●
Scenic value		●					●	
Special provisions, cf. art. 37. and 39., Act no. 44/1999 on Nature Conservation								
Volcanic craters, pseudocraters, lava fields	Freshwater lakes and pools $\geq 1000 \text{ m}^2$					Natural birch forests		●
Waterfalls	Bogs and fens, $> 3 \text{ ha}$	●				Forests for outdoor leisure		
Hot springs and thermal sources, surfacial geothermal deposits	Salt marshes and mudflats	●						

Figure 4 A sample matrix from the UST report. Translation from Icelandic by the authors.

The Problematization of Landscape Evaluation

As already mentioned, landscape was not used as a key premise for conservation in any of the 75 proposals. Nevertheless, it is evident that, among the experts at UST especially, there was a desire to be able to do just that, and according to their presentation of the methodology (Umhverfisstofnun, 2003) this is what they aim for in strategies to come. For future purposes it is therefore necessary to examine which factors prevented landscape from being used as a premise for protection during the preparation of this first version of the strategy.

One of the interviewees spoke of the general acknowledgement that, as it would not be possible to cover all the defined objects of natural heritage, selectiveness would be inevitable. Furthermore, many highlighted the decision to base the first strategy on already available data. The existing databases at NI thus led to the decision to focus on the protection of those species of birds and plants that were considered to be most in need of protection (cf. Lorimer, 2006). No similar data exist for landscapes. During the preparation process, it was not possible to rectify this shortage of data as the timeframe was short and the budget did not allow for the collection of new data. This raises the question as to whether the lack of data was the only reason. This is not so. Many interviewees pointed out other factors, some of which also help to clarify why a database of landscape still does not exist.

The first factor regards landscape as a concept. It has still not been defined in the Nature Conservation Act (nor in any other Icelandic legislation), although the term is used in several paragraphs. This makes it very difficult to use the landscape concept in planning of any kind in Iceland. To support this argument is the important fact that, in 2001, the wording of the Nature Conservation Act was amended. The category 'landscape types' was replaced throughout the act with 'geological formations and ecosystems'. It thus seems that ideas about landscape were somewhat nebulous when the current conservation legislation was drawn up. One of the experts argued that once the definition was ready, landscape could be categorized and consequently it would be possible to build-up a database to work with. This lack of conceptual clarity explains only part of the problem, however.

The second factor regards the difficult step from inventory to evaluation. The same interviewee claimed that selection on the grounds of such a database would be impossible without defining conservation criteria and 'need of protection' specifically for landscape. Other interviewees agreed. One said, 'we really need a scientific approach and methodology to evaluate landscape'. The biodiversity oriented methodology developed for the first strategy therefore does not seem to be applicable to landscape. When asked, one of the experts at UST replied that it would be difficult to evaluate landscape applying those methods. Moreover, he said that this was one of the reasons why the agency had not felt up to the task of putting emphasis on landscape.

Yet, the interviewees offered different suggestions of possible methodologies for evaluating landscape. One believed that the methodology of the strategy could be used once a proper inventory of landscape was available. A few suggested that social science methods be used, such as questionnaires, where 'the public' could choose landscapes to protect. The importance of persons with extensive experience of Icelandic nature was also

mentioned. One interviewee even proposed that it would suffice to have a single person traversing the country, who afterwards would be able to come up with an informed evaluation. All these ideas either emphasized the importance of comparison between sites or quantitative reasoning in order to achieve impartiality and objectivity in line with the prevailing governmental rationality.

The third factor relates to the differing roles of the two governmental bodies UST and NI. As already mentioned, NI is responsible for basic research about Icelandic nature. UST on the other hand is responsible for assessing conservation values. For some of the interviewees, the distinction between these two roles was blurred when it came to landscape. At NI, one of the experts was of the opinion that it was not NI's job to base its conservation proposals upon landscape as its employees were 'no better equipped than our fellow countrymen to evaluate beauty'. This person thus substitutes the term 'beauty' for 'landscape' and apparently attributes a subjective and relative value to it. As the experts at NI are generally preoccupied with phenomena to which the natural sciences can be applied, they have no experience in landscape evaluation and are thus not experts in that field, despite their formal qualifications as scientists. This perspective, however, was not prevalent among those interviewed at NI. On the contrary, the others precisely saw landscape evaluation as their business. One indeed felt that it was the responsibility of NI to collect data on landscape—the institution's legal role being to collect data on Iceland's natural heritage. This, however, would have to be done in co-operation with people outside the NI who have acquired relevant experience:

Cooperation is very important, especially when it comes to landscape, since you then have so many aspects of nature other than those you can measure directly. You have the artistic aspect, you have the colours, you have the emotional aspect.

A similar perspective appeared at UST, but some interviewees there said that the collection of data was perhaps not best handled by NI as landscape was unique compared with other features of natural heritage. One of the UST experts even felt that it would be more appropriate if UST alone handled all landscape related issues. Still that person did not see any obstacles to NI collecting the data as long as there would be a shared understanding of both the database and the methods.

To sum this up, landscape has remained as an undefined phenomenon, which makes it very difficult to collect data about it. Neither is it clear as to who should collect the data, since—although landscape is understood as part of the natural heritage and should therefore be handled by NI—it is seen as having a subjective character, which makes it difficult for the staff at NI to perform their expertise as confidently as they have done regarding other aspects of the natural heritage. Furthermore, it remains unclear as to how data about landscape should be evaluated as the methodology introduced with the first strategy was not designed to tackle subjective phenomena. Thus, at the end of the day, neither NI or UST seem to have possessed the expertise required to legitimate any decisionmaking based on landscape.

Landscape conceptualized

In order to better understand why the methodology developed with the new strategy is seen not to be applicable to landscape, and what kind of expertise is required for basing conservation proposals on landscape, the analysis above calls for an examination of how the experts conceptualize it. Participants were not explicitly asked to define landscape, although many implicitly did offer a definition and some reflected thoroughly upon the concept. All, however, seemed to share the opinion that landscape is hard to pin down as a concept. At first, the various understandings seemed to contradict each other, but further examination of the data revealed their interrelations.

Physical qualities

The interviews revealed different perceptions of landscape that related either to physical or subjective realities or both. Regarding the physical aspect, it had a clear connotation with the objects defined by the natural sciences:

We can see landscape as a geological phenomenon, and partly as a biological phenomenon as well, when we talk about the vegetation in these areas. This of course has to do with geology—the type of bedrock, how permeable it is and so on. ... That of course determines the vegetation.

Combinations of natural features (i.e. geological formations, vegetation and hydrology) constitute the physical reality in this view. Accordingly, different combinations create different characteristics of the landscape.

This perspective excludes humans from landscape. Its realist ontology is resolutely materialistic. It appeared among some interviewees in various guises. Landscapes were sometimes indirectly equated with mountains. At other times, it was argued that landscape should be defined by its geology and vegetation. Those who had reflected more upon the concept emphasized the limitation of such a perspective. For example, one pointed out that people often confused geological formations with landscapes, which created a problem of duplication when the objects defined by the natural sciences were evaluated simultaneously with landscape. Another said, ‘if something is landscape, then it is something else as well, isn’t it? Then it is geological formations, then it is vegetation’.

As can be seen in the matrix from the strategy report (Figure 4), the three basic features of the physical landscape—geological formations, vegetation and hydrology—are represented as objects in themselves. Interestingly enough, none of the other objects in the matrix was ever mentioned in relation to landscape. Animals, for example, were never referred to in that context and thus do not seem to co-constitute the physical landscape. Regarding wilderness, a few interviewees clearly distinguished it from landscape as it is defined in Icelandic legislation by the criteria of size and the absence of human-made structures. Discussion on cultural and historical relics did not make a connection to landscape and thus cultural landscapes were absent from the discourse.

Visual qualities

Those who criticized the physical view argued for a different conceptualization, where landscape would not be defined as the simple sum of these features of nature, but their interplay. One interviewee said he would define landscape as ‘forms, outlines, colours, texture, and experiential encounters’²⁹. On the basis of these aspects, apart from experiential encounters though, this expert envisaged the categorization of landscape into different types such as ‘fjord landscapes, plateau landscapes, heath landscapes’ and so on. Some other interviewees shared this perspective.

This conceptualization of landscape is clearly based upon the physical features mentioned above. Forms and outlines (i.e. morphology) are predominantly determined by geological circumstances, which together with hydrological patterns and vegetation create different textures and colours. This understanding is reflected graphically in the words of one of the experts:

But then there is this interplay, especially in case of the glaciers, the glacial landscape where we have these great contrasts. In some places there is white, there are dark colours, there is green, and even black in the foreground. The sand, the vegetation, and bare rock or mountains, and the glacier.

But even though the ingredients are the same as in the ‘simple’ physical approach, the visual approach is different. Here, humans indirectly co-constitute the landscape. The landscape is seen as a picture, always from an actual viewpoint in the physical landscape, and thus corresponds to a visual combination of natural features. The landscape is brought into existence, as it were, through the human gaze. It may thus be argued that, although this visual landscape is based on the objective reality of the physical landscape, the perspective is essentially subjective. This does not necessarily imply a relativist position, but rather one approaching Kant’s idea of ‘subjective universality’ (Kant, 1790/2000).

Affective aspects

Turning now to experiential encounters, which was mentioned above by one of the experts, it is the underpinning of the third perspective that was revealed in our data:

Landscape is of course to a great extent subjective; you create your own image of it.

Understanding landscape as a thoroughly subjective phenomenon was discernible among most of the interviewees either directly or indirectly. In addition to the physical features and their visual interplay, landscape was thought of in terms of affects and emotions. Interestingly, this understanding was in most cases connected with beauty. Thus, the expert quoted above continued:

²⁹ ‘Experiential encounter’ is our translation of the Icelandic term *reynsla*, which is usually translated into English simply as ‘experience’. In this context, the term emphasizes personal experience and the impression it leaves. Elsewhere in the paper, the term ‘experience’ refers to knowledge or skill acquired through repeated practices over time.

You think this landscape is beautiful because this is where you were brought up.

Landscape and the experience of beauty are so tightly connected in the minds of the experts that they cannot be taken apart. Feelings provoked by the natural features seem to be aesthetic. However, owing to other subjective aspects, such as memories from childhood or previous travels, this very experience can be disrupted:

There is no doubt that people's opinions of landscapes differ, according to whether one is brought up in an urban or a rural area, or whether one has travelled much or not.

Whereas the landscapes of childhood were always thought to produce positive sentiments, travels could produce both positive and negative responses. For example, one interviewee mentioned two areas, which in his mind were marked by unpleasant memories from childhood, of long hours in the backseat of his parents' car. He noted as well that later travel experiences from adulthood had transformed his sentiments towards one of the areas so that in his mind it had changed from ugly to beautiful.

'Beautiful' landscape?

Although the discourse about landscape was to a great extent about beauty and the subjectiveness of the affective aspects, many of the interviewees were of the opinion that while beauty in these terms was subjective, and hence relative, places which the majority of people find beautiful do exist:

Take Gullfoss as an example. People generally agree that it is a beautiful waterfall. And how are you going to explain that? There simply is an agreement about it. People think it is majestic, big, magnificent.

Some of those who made similar comments reflected upon the reasons for such an agreement. One, for example, reckoned that certain interplay of the natural features had a particular appeal for most people:

I have never met people who cannot but adore glacial landscapes, as in Skaftafell for example.

Where we have rhyolite, geothermal fields and snow ... I have never met people who are not moved by such combinations.

The rhyolite mountains—the interplay between the rock and the vegetation. The colours. This is something that people seek as well.

According to this, certain combinations of colours in the physical landscape are more likely to lead to feelings of enchantment. Another interviewee felt the need for a more comprehensive account of the composition of such beautiful places:

Beauty cannot be seen in isolation. ... You need to connect beauty to some phenomena, not look at it as a cosmic experience. ... Everybody finds Gullfoss

beautiful, and why is that? Well, the waterfall is divided in two, it is foamy and white, it is in a certain setting, something like that. ... You must try to pin it down somehow.

This understanding of beauty contradicts the one described above as part of the affective aspects of landscape. Instead of beauty being considered as subjective and relative, it is here seen as universal and defined by natural features. This contradiction, often seen in the comments made by the same individuals, constituted a problem for many, but to them it still seemed to capture an important aspect of the landscape concept as if the key to landscape evaluation was somehow to be found there.

To conclude, the interviews with the experts revealed different understandings of landscape. It was not so, however, that each expert held one particular understanding only, but rather that the individual conceptualizations each touched upon various understandings. At first glance, the conceptualization of landscape outlined above does not correspond to any singular theory about landscape. Each understanding, however, relates to distinct definitions and discussions (Brady, 2003; Wylie, 2007). But what is of particular interest here is how 'beauty' and 'landscape' are equated throughout the interviews and how landscape is therefore seen as a subjective phenomenon. Yet, there is the idea of universal beauty or landscapes that everyone finds beautiful. This represents an attempt to objectify a phenomenon, which nevertheless is considered as being essentially subjective.

The performance of expertise and the experts' dilemma

Inspired by the theories of governmentality and performance, we have described the performances of experts during the preparation of the first Nature Conservation Strategy in Iceland. Our focus has been on two challenges faced by the experts at UST and NI in the process; first, to develop a methodology for the strategy as a whole and second, to subject landscape to that methodology.

Regarding the first challenge, our analysis revealed that the experts relied to a great extent on former practices and knowledge. Their educational background (mostly in biology) served as a point of departure when developing a new methodology. Existing databases of birds and plants became the 'real world' upon which the strategy would focus (cf. Bowker, 2000). The scientific interest at NI in the past hence served to frame the proposals for protection (cf. Lorimer, 2006). Arguably, the proposals were therefore both partial and subjective, despite the emphasis put on impartiality and objectivity in the new methodology.

Former practices and knowledges framed the experts' performances in different ways as well. Thus, the experts at UST initially applied the same methods as in the Registry of Sites of Natural Interests. At NI, the Registry also influenced the experts, albeit quite differently: through comparison, they visioned the new methodology as a reversal of the one used before. This broadens the understanding of performance. As already argued, performance is never a mere replication of former practices, but rather a creative process taking place in a

new setting (cf. Lorimer & Lund, 2003; Waterton, 2003). This indicates an agreement with former practices. Our analysis has shown, however, that a discordant relation to former practices may also help to inform performances.

Power contests soon surfaced after the preparation began, which revealed the prevailing governmental rationality. Objectivism associated with the natural science emphasis on biodiversity conservation served to channel the development of the new methodology as it implied a certain discourse or a 'regime of truth'. As noted by Foucault (1971/1981), discourse is also a 'will to truth' as it pushes away whatever it cannot assimilate. The overall effect was that subjective evaluation was ruled out as the natural science emphasis became dominant in the new methodology.

The outcome of this first challenge profoundly influenced the second one (i.e. to subject landscape to the methodologies of biodiversity conservation). As the analysis has shown, it is evident that despite all the weight the experts put on the physical and measurable aspects of landscape, all of them acknowledged that landscape is to a great extent subjective.

Clearly, the affects created by experiential encounters with landscape co-constitute the experts' performances. The analysis therefore corresponds to a relational ontology, which acknowledges that performances are not merely the result of conscious acts, but 'caught up with and committed to the creation of affect' (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p. 415). But additionally, our analysis shows that the experts cannot put aside the affects resulting from experiential encounters with landscape. Their performances therefore seem to be necessarily co-constituted by affects, despite the performativity of the landscape idea as it appears in the strategy's matrix as well as the considerable efforts made to treat landscape as an objective entity by means of the new methodology.

The subjective aspect of landscape was always linked to aesthetic values. This became the experts' recurring, nagging problem. The dilemma, particularly from the point of view of those within NI, is that the aesthetic values of landscape resist being measured and evaluated by means of the presumably objective methods of the natural sciences. The problem was crystallized with these words of one of the interviewees:

There is no point in us sending a formal proposal to the Minister or to the Agency, about protecting some site because we think it is beautiful. They would just laugh at us.

This position reveals a very pragmatic approach to the dilemma facing the experts, which needs, however, to be clarified in other terms. Seeing nature through the lens of biological diversity implies a non-anthropocentric and objective evaluation, where the intrinsic values of nature are at the forefront. Landscape on the other hand is conceptualized as being partially subjective and hence relative. This results in an ontological paradox, which constitutes part of the dilemma. Furthermore, the evaluation of biological diversity requires certain knowledge and techniques and can thus only be mastered by experts in the field. Regarding landscape evaluation on the other hand, one cannot point unequivocally to some fields of knowledge as being more appropriate than others, owing to its subjectiveness. The dilemma is therefore also partly epistemological. Introducing landscape as a premise for selection has the drawback of undermining the 'regime of truth' inherent in the discourse

upon biodiversity conservation. Thus one interviewee at NI, when asked whether other reasoning than the scientific should have a place, replied:

Then we would be destroying the methodology, by ... suddenly referring to emotions and saying, 'over there is a beautiful flower-covered hillside, and here is a beautiful waterfall'.

The idea of 'universal beauty' of landscape indicates the experts' efforts to avoid the dilemma and make landscape governable. If beauty of the landscape can be seen as universal and not relative, then there must be a way to measure and evaluate it. In this manner, the aesthetic is situated among the objects of the natural sciences and hence becomes feasible to deal with. At the same time, the subjective character of the landscape is objectified.

Interestingly, this happens simultaneously with the development of an objective methodology. As said before, part of the methodological development involved the sidelining of the supposedly weak reasoning practiced before, when sites were only listed in the Registry of Sites of Natural Interest such as the beauty of places. The introduction of landscape to the methodology may very well be the result of this sidelining. 'Landscape' was repeatedly equated with 'beauty' throughout the interviews, and so, through the concept of landscape, aesthetic appreciation is still part of the methodology. Perhaps the various understandings of landscape, and the possibilities that are thus created for putting the concept to use in different ways, are precisely the reason for landscape being introduced into the discourse. When the physical aspects of landscape are at the forefront, as tend to be the case when natural science methods provide the point of departure, the objectification of landscape seems to be easier to attain than the objectification of beauty. It is as if landscape has become the embodiment of aesthetic appreciation. In this way, the experts' performances open a door to the otherwise inadmissible concept of beauty—yet inseparable from their experience of the natural environment—without transgressing the prevailing 'rules of right' in this discourse.

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II Landscape in the sagas of Icelanders: The concepts of *land* and *landsleg*³⁰

Introduction

One prominent line of enquiry in landscape studies has been the historical trajectory of landscape as a concept in the West. Denis Cosgrove's (1984) exploration of the idea of landscape, which he theorises as a 'way of seeing', was a landmark, and has prompted different researchers to engage in conceptual analyses of landscape. One such researcher is Kenneth Olwig, whose etymological approach has led him to argue for a more substantive meaning of the concept than generally envisaged by its modern English usage (Olwig 1996), namely a conception of landscape grounded in law and custom, sometimes referred to as 'Nordic' (Olwig 2003; 2007).

Some of the conceptual explorations of the English landscape concept and its Germanic cognates seek to account for cultural differences, while at the same time the discourse is somewhat unified and legitimised on grounds of etymological reasoning, either implicitly or explicitly. For example, the Germanic origin of the term is often recounted, together with an explanation of how 'landscape', '*Landschaft*', '*landschap*', '*landskab*', and '*landskap*' are related (e.g. Tress & Tress 2001; Mels 2005; Spirn 2005; Antrop 2006; Jones 2006). Growing interest in cultural differences has also been directed towards parallel concepts in linguistic communities other than those of Germanic origin (e.g. Keisteri 1990; Gehring & Kohsaka 2007; Shaw & Oldfield 2007).

The research presented here focuses on the Icelandic landscape concept *landslag*. Icelandic is a North Germanic language, together with the Scandinavian languages and Faroese, and is thus Nordic. As such, it is part of the cultural world defined by the Germanic languages. Yet, as the analysis will show, the Icelandic landscape concept only to a limited extent shares the etymological origin of its Germanic counterparts and their historical evolution. The Icelandic concept has its own history. Interestingly, it shares to a large extent the most common meaning of the English landscape concept today, which is aesthetic appreciation of natural scenery, whereas it appears to have no connections to the 'Nordic' landscape conception, as might be expected.

³⁰ This paper has previously been published as a research article. Please consult the original publication for citation:

Waage, E. R. H. (2012). Landscape in the Sagas of Icelanders: The concepts of *land* and *landsleg*. Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography, 66(4), 177–192.

This study seeks to explore the deep-rooted meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept and to investigate its origin. It takes as its point of departure the present-day lexical meaning of *landslag* and traces it to some of the oldest preserved occurrences of the term, found in the sagas of Icelanders that date back as far as the early 1300s.

The article first outlines some of the main characteristics of the English landscape concept that are of relevance for this study, as presented in the work of geographers Cosgrove and Olwig. Thereafter, the Icelandic landscape concept is introduced. The article proceeds with a presentation of the sagas of Icelanders and the methodology applied in the study. This is followed by a conceptual analysis, focusing on the Icelandic landscape concept as it appears in the sagas: for this purpose, special attention is given to the different conceptions of land, and then examples of the Icelandic landscape concept are thoroughly explored. This is followed by a discussion of the relations between the Icelandic concept and the English concept, and the suggestion that accounts of the origins of the aesthetic element of landscape may need to be reconsidered. The article concludes by stressing the importance of acknowledging the cultural meaning of *landslag* for successful implementation of the concept in planning.

Landscape – *landskapr* – *landslag*/*landsleg*

The dual meaning of the term landscape, either as ‘a picture representing natural inland scenery, as distinguished from a sea picture, a portrait, etc.’, or ‘a view or prospect of natural inland scenery, such as can be taken in at a glance from one point of view; a piece of country scenery’ (Oxford English Dictionary 1989: landscape), has been the cause of much contemplation among geographers and has served as a platform for divergent argumentation.

Cosgrove (1984) noted that the former meaning dates back to the early 1600s, while the oldest example of the latter meaning is found in a text from 1725. Accordingly, he argued that its meaning as pictorial representation preceded its meaning as natural scenery. The term was adopted in the 16th century from Dutch painters who had used it to denote empirical representations of rural life. The art form, however, was to a great extent inspired by ideas and techniques from Renaissance Italy, especially innovations in vision and artistic representations of land, such as the linear perspective. Cosgrove reasoned that the landscape idea represents ‘a way of seeing’ the world, a way that is socially constructed and historically embedded in the modernisation of Europe. The critical focus of Cosgrove’s thesis is that whereas the landscape idea denotes a view of land, one of its characteristics is a separation and distance between the viewer and what is being viewed. The landscape idea thus ‘separates subject and object, giving lordship to the eye of a single observer’ (Cosgrove 1984, 262).

By contrast, Olwig (2002; 2007), who has sought to recover the original understanding of landscape (Mels 2003; Wylie 2007), rejected the reasoning that the primary meaning of landscape was a pictorial representation, because it fails to take into account that the term had been used for a long time before landscape painting emerged in the 16th century. Olwig referred to the Germanic languages in Northern Europe and their various spellings of the word; in German it is *Landschaft*, and in Danish *landskab*. As widely recognised,

Landschaft referred to an area or region, but with reference to selected texts Olwig (2002) showed that the areal understanding does not do justice to the concept. Rather, in Renaissance Europe landscape had much the same meaning as ‘country’ today. He consequently argued that the ‘the primary meaning of *Landschaft* appears to have been a judicially defined polity, not a spatially defined area’ (Olwig 2002, 19). Hence, landscape was not defined by physical features of the land or by territorial rule, but by social characteristics from within. The ‘landscape law’ was a customary law that had evolved over time in a particular context and in a way that reflected the cultural identity of the landscape. However, the polity also found physical expression in the very place of the polity and its environment, which in turn bore witness to its customary practices. The physical environment may thus be regarded as a material reflection of the landscape. Hence, this landscape, according to Olwig, was the subject of the Dutch painters in the 16th century.

Although Cosgrove and Olwig differ strongly on some fundamental premises, they both emphasise how societal characteristics have given rise to and influenced the landscape concept. In their articulation, landscape is descriptive of social, historical, economic, and political processes that are reflected in the materiality of landscape and landscape representations, as well as their entwinement (Mitchell 2005). This aspect of the landscape concept has been elaborated on by Mels (2005; 2006) in his study of the northern Low Countries around the year 1600.

The meaning of land plays also an important role in Cosgrove’s and Olwig’s argumentation, albeit differently: Cosgrove highlights the altering and alienating human-land relationship entailed by the introduction of capitalism, stressing the importance of land tenure among the European elite for the emergence of the landscape concept. Olwig similarly emphasises land boundaries, but his reasoning relies somewhat more on the idea of free farmers as representatives of their own lands. Moreover, one of the core premises in Olwig’s thesis relates to the meaning of land in the term landscape. Land, he argues, refers first and foremost to a socially defined area, but not to physical characteristics of the earth (Olwig 1996; 2002).

Lastly, as noted also by Mels (2003), both Cosgrove and Olwig seem to share the idea that an aesthetic appreciation of landscape is rooted in the Renaissance, and that the linear perspective played a particularly important role in that context. In the 17th and 18th centuries the boundaries between landscape painting and what it represented gradually became blurred, as ‘the educated classes learned to see the world as a scenic resource’ (Olwig 2002, 117). Hence, the countryside was turned into a landscape, an object of aesthetic appreciation. Romantic influences in the 19th century further induced changes to the conception of landscape, which resulted in landscape and nature becoming almost interchangeable categories (Cosgrove 1984). Aesthetic appreciation is thus integral to the socio-historical and material processes landscape describes. Setten (2003) gives a coherent description of these ‘landscapes of gaze’, as represented by Cosgrove and Olwig, in her critique of the dualism embedded in the visual and scenic approach taken to landscape.

The above-mentioned topics have informed my research on the Icelandic landscape concept. They have given rise to the following questions: What kind of land is being referred to in the term *landslag*? What kind of human-land relationship does the *landslag* concept describe? To what extent does the concept depend on societal features and

landownership? Does the aesthetic appreciation of land that appears to be embedded in the Icelandic landscape concept stem from influence of the English landscape concept, and can this be fully explained by artistic development in the wake of Renaissance and Romanticism?

Landscape in Iceland

The Icelandic term for landscape, *landslag*, is defined in the Icelandic dictionary as the ‘total appearance of an area of land, the form of nature in a particular place’³¹ (M. Árnason 2007: *landslag*). According to the *Íslensk samheitaorðabók* (Thesaurus of Icelandic), the synonym of *landslag* is *náttúra* (nature) (Sigmundsson 1985: *landslag*). The archaic spelling of *landslag* is *landsleg*, and the oldest preserved example of the term identified so far dates back to the late 1200s (*Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* n.d.). Apparently, the change from *landsleg* to *landslag* occurred during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries (Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans n.d.: *landslag*, *landsleg*). Despite this change and slight modifications made in lexical definitions, its meaning appears to have remained the same from medieval times to the present day (Möbius 1866; Blöndal 1920–1924; Böðvarsson 1963; 1983; Fritzner 1973 [1867]; Cleasby & Vigfusson 1975 [1874]; Zoëga 1975 [1910]; B. Halldórsson 1992 [1814]). Unfortunately, *landslag* is not an entry in the *Íslensk orðsifjabók* (Etymological Dictionary of Icelandic) (Magnússon 1989), but clearly it is a compound noun, consisting of the nouns *land* and *leg*. The lexical entry of *landslag* does not mention aesthetic appreciation, but according to the *Orðastaður: Orðabók um íslenska málnotkun* (Dictionary of the Use of Icelandic) the term is most often accompanied by qualifying adjectives such as: ‘beautiful, scenic, impressive, magnificent, effective, spectacular, majestic, expressive, grand, tremendous, unimpressive, monotonous, bland, insignificant’³² (J.H. Jónsson 1994: *landslag*). Aesthetic appreciation is therefore arguably entwined with the concept (Waage 2010; Waage & Benediktsson 2010).

Old Norse, which developed into the North Germanic languages, featured the term *landskapr*. The Danish *landskab*, and the Norwegian and Swedish *landskap* are etymological derivatives of *landskapr*. Also the Icelandic language has featured this term. It appears in ecclesiastical texts written originally in the 14th century,³³ possibly owing to influences from Norway via the church. The term seems to have gained some prevalence in the 16th and 17th centuries (Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans n.d.: *landskapur*), but later became obsolete.

An electronic search through digital versions of the sagas of Icelanders, as well as the *Landnámabók* (The Book of Settlements),³⁴ reveals the absence of the term *landskapr*.

³¹ ‘Heildarútlit landsvæðis, form náttúru á tilteknum stað.’

³² ‘Fallegt, fagurt, tilkomumikið, mikilfenglegt, áhrifamikið, stórbrotið, tignarlegt, svipmikið, stórgert, hrikalegt, tilkomulítið, tilbreytingalaust, sviplítið, lítilfjörlegt.’

³³ The term *landskapr* appears in different texts. Among these are three different stories of bishops in Iceland: *Guðmundar saga Arasonar*, *Lárentíus saga biskups*, and *Þorláks saga biskups yngri*. The term *landskapr* also appears in *Stjórn*, which is a translation of biblical texts.

³⁴ *Landnámabók* lists 430 settlers, both men and women, in Iceland. The oldest manuscript preserved (AM 371 4^o) dates back to the beginning of the 14th century. The work, however, is much older. See further discussion under the section heading ‘Origins of the concept of *landsleg*’.

These works discuss extensively the settlement of Iceland, land tenure, and related issues. Both the terms *landskapr* and *landsleg* are absent from the major law books from the 12th to 14th centuries: *Grágás*,³⁵ *Járnsíða*,³⁶ and *Jónsbók*.³⁷ *Grágás* is mostly a collection of customary laws that developed in Iceland (G. Karlsson et al. 2001), while the other two had a Norwegian origin (Bernharðsson et al. 2005; M. Jónsson 2004). The absence of *landskapr* in these major texts suggests that the term was not part of the Icelandic vocabulary by the time these texts were written.

The study

The sagas of Icelanders, often referred to simply as the sagas, are doubtless the most prominent genre of Iceland's literary heritage (Lönnroth 2008). They are set primarily in Iceland in the first two decades after settlement occurred in the late 9th and early 10th centuries. Accordingly, the main characters are the first settlers in Iceland and their descendants. The sagas were most probably written over a span of two centuries, from the early 13th century until the early 15th century (G. Nordal 2008). Their authors remain unknown and their historical accuracy has been debated. Today, the predominant view is that the sagas are original compositions based on oral history (Ólason 2002). Despite the ambiguity in that regard, they certainly bear witness to the language of the times when they were written, which makes them valuable for exploring the conceptual meaning of terms used at the time.

None of the original manuscripts has been preserved, only copies found in diverse parchments, the oldest of which date back to the 13th century. Scribes copied and sometimes edited the manuscripts. Hence, a particular saga may exist in two or more versions. Some are in one piece whereas others are fragmented, and thus some of the sagas exist only as an aggregate of fragments from diverse parchments. Some have then been preserved in paper copies from the 17th century. Often, there is one version that is more concise and therefore shorter than the other. In most cases, the longer versions are believed to be older and closer to the original text (Kristjánsson 1978). Different versions apart, c.40 different narratives have been preserved in total.³⁸

The sagas were written in Old Icelandic, a dialect of Old Norse. According to historical sources, the settlers in Iceland came mainly from Norway, but on the way a few had stopped temporarily in the British Isles, thus contributing to the multicultural background of the settlements (Sigurðsson 2008). Genetic research shows that the first settlers were

³⁵ *Grágás* is a collection of laws from the Commonwealth period in Iceland (930–1262). Originally written in the 12th century, *Grágás* is preserved mainly in two parchment manuscripts, both from the middle of the 13th century: *Konungsbók* (GKS 1157 fol, 1240–1260), and *Staðarhólsbók* (AM 334 fol, 1260–1270).

³⁶ *Járnsíða* is a lawbook that replaced *Grágás* in 1271, when Icelanders acknowledged the king of Norway as their sovereign. It is mainly based on Norwegian law. It has been preserved in one parchment manuscript, *Staðarhólsbók* (AM 334 fol), which was written in 1270–1280.

³⁷ *Jónsbók* is a lawbook that replaced *Járnsíða* in 1281. It has been preserved in various manuscripts, the oldest of which dates back to the late 13th century (AM 134 4°, 1281–1294).

³⁸ Some publications of the sagas include a number of 'tales of Icelanders' (*Íslendingaþættir*), short stories found in various medieval manuscripts that feature Icelanders as their main protagonists, some of which also appear in the sagas. The analysis presented here does not include these tales.

primarily of Scandinavian and Gaelic origin (Helgason et al. 2000a; 2000b). As Old Norse was spoken in Scandinavia, it was the main language of the first settlers in Iceland. In view of the cultural interaction, there is no doubt that some of the first settlers spoke Gaelic too (Ólason 2002; Barnes 2008). After the conversion to Christianity took place in Iceland around the year 1000, the language was subject to influences from English missionary bishops who resided in the country for a while (Hjálmarsson 1993; Þórólfsson 2004 [1950]). Nonetheless, texts that date back to 1200 show hardly any difference between the languages spoken in Norway and Iceland at the time. The languages began to diverge during the 13th century, however, and by the 14th century the difference was significant (K. Árnason & Pind 2005; *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* 1989). By this time, the people of Iceland defined themselves as Icelanders (Hastrup 1982; 1985), and their language is now referred to as Old Icelandic.

The influence of the Church proved to be crucial for the development of Iceland's cultural heritage through the introduction of the art of writing. The two bishoprics in Iceland became centres of learning, and along with monasteries produced a large proportion of the parchment manuscripts (S. Óskarsdóttir 2002). At the outset the written language was Latin and the texts were ecclesiastical. However, equipped with and inspired by the art of writing, Icelanders started to write in their mother tongue around the year 1100, and consequently they were able to record their laws, genealogy, and history. This gave rise to the writing of narrative prose of diverse kinds, including the sagas.

Method

The analysis presented here is threefold, and is primarily based on an in-depth reading of the sagas' texts. The first step consisted of conducting an electronic search for all the instances where the term *land* appears in the complete set of the sagas.³⁹ An open coding of the respective excerpts, in line with grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998), helped to reveal conceptual differences of the term. This entailed an empirical approach to the data, rather than reliance on preconceived ideas.

In order to explore how the different conceptions of land constitute compound words, such as *landsleg*, all compounds that shared land as their first component were subsequently identified within the sagas by electronic search. These were related to the different conceptions of land in accordance with the previous step of the analysis. Furthermore, this enabled comparison between *landsleg* and the other compounds, giving an insight into how *landsleg* is entwined in the discourse on land.

³⁹ Although the sagas are generally said to count 40 different narratives, in accordance with a popular edition (B. Halldórsson et al. 1987), the number 40 is not fixed in all editions. Here, 42 sagas were used for the analysis: *Bandamanna saga*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa*, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Egils saga*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Færeyinga saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Grænlendinga saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Gull-Þóris saga*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormsungu*, *Hænsna-Þóris saga*, *Hallfreðar saga vandræðaskálds*, *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, *Heiðarvíga saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, *Hrana saga hrings*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Ljósvefninga saga*, *Ölkofra saga*, *Reykðæla saga og Víga-Skútu*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Víglundar saga*, and *Vopnfirðinga saga*.

The first two steps of the analysis were carried out using an electronic version of the sagas in modern Icelandic (Netútgáfan n.d.) as the main database, using the analytical software Atlas.ti (Version 4.2). While this greatly facilitated the analysis, the decision to use a modern Icelandic edition of the sagas may be open to debate.

The biggest obstacle for a present-day Icelander when reading the manuscripts of the sagas involves handwriting, as most of the preserved medieval manuscripts were written in Pregothisc script (Gunnlaugsson 2002). When the texts of the manuscripts are transcribed, this obstacle is removed. There are different reproductions of the sagas' texts, which are more accessible than the original manuscripts. Ideally, diplomatic editions of the sagas should be used for carrying out analyses. However, only a few of the sagas have been published in such editions. The choice between a diplomatic edition and a normalised one also depends on what kind of analysis the texts are to be used for. Normalising the texts of the medieval manuscripts entails that variations in the original spelling are lost. Editing the texts in accordance with the modern language may furthermore blur some nuances of the language as it was used at the time of writing (Gunnlaugsson 2003; Bernharðsson 2005). Although the modern Icelandic editions feature normalised spelling in accordance with the modern language, it is important to note that they still remain faithful to the exact wording of the old manuscripts. No words have been changed, substituted, or translated, nor has their syntactic arrangement been modified. Therefore, for the purpose of my study, a modern Icelandic edition was sufficient and would not undermine the results of the analytical outcome.

The third step of the analysis consisted of isolating the excerpts containing the term *landsleg* for close and careful reading and comparison, taking into consideration the wider text in order to explore embedded connotations of the concept. A scholarly edition of the sagas was used (the standard edition), featuring normalised spelling in Old Icelandic (*Íslenzk fornrit* 1933–2011). Each occurrence of the term *landsleg*, as well as the wording of the excerpts, was furthermore verified in facsimiles of the respective manuscripts (Figure 5) (Reeves 1890; Sagnanet: Icelandic medieval literature n.d.; The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies n.d.; The Scaldic Project Academic Body 2001–2012). In using an edited version of the sagas, the analysis was inevitably based on the manuscripts that the respective editors chose for their publications. As noted earlier (in the section headed 'The study'), some of the sagas have been preserved in different manuscripts, sometimes in multiple versions. Hence, although all the examples of *landsleg* were verified in the respective manuscripts, the possibility remains that the concept was used more widely, and could be found in manuscripts that have not been used for publication.

To help the reader, all quotations from the sagas are given in English. Although the texts have been previously translated into English (e.g. *The Faroe Islanders' Saga* 1975; Hreinsson 1997), all translations presented here are my own. Although existing translations may feature better language, I have made a conscious effort to keep my own translations as literal as possible, for transparency. For every quotation, the original text is given in an endnote.

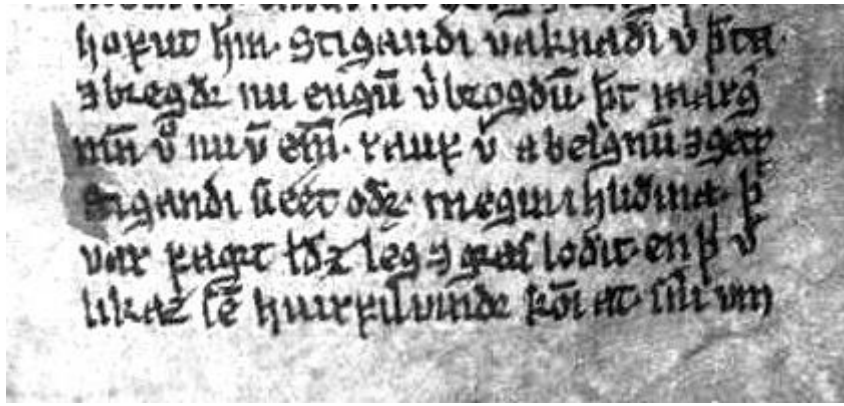


Figure 5 An excerpt from *Laxdæla saga* (The Saga of the Laxdælar), as it appeared in the *Möðruvallabók* manuscript (AM 132 fol, page 174 r), written in the period between 1330-1370, showing the term *landsleg* being used. Published with the permission of Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies.

(... *höfuð honum. Stígandi vaknaði við þetta ok bregðr nú engum viðbrögðum, því at margir menn váru nú um einn. Rauf var á belgnum, ok getr Stígandi sét öðrum megin í hlíðina; þar var fagrt landsleg ok grasloðit; en því var líkast, sem hvirfilvindr komi at; sneri um ...*)

Conceptions of 'land'

The term *land* has different meanings and is found in all Germanic languages. As one of the constituents of the term landscape, the meaning of *land* is central to the meaning of the landscape concept (Olwig 1996; Plumwood 2006; Barry & Smith 2008). The concept of *land* has received less attention among geographers than other concepts that relate to landscape, such as *nature*, *place*, and *environment* (e.g. Setten 2005). An exception, however, is Elden's (2010) investigation of the relations between land, terrain, and territory. The *Dictionary of Human Geography* (Gregory et al. 2009) does not even contain an entry for the term land.

In both Old Icelandic (Cleasby & Vigfusson 1975 [1874]) and modern Icelandic (M. Árnason 2007), the primary meaning of *land* is 'dry land' as opposed to sea. Etymologically, *land* is probably linked with the terms *lend* and *lund*, both of which can mean hip or loins (Magnússon 1989: *land, lend, lund*). The original meaning of land may have been a curve, or rise and fall in the topography. The term *lend* may in early times have referred to shared characteristics of landscape and the body of humans and/or animals, just as the terms *háls* (neck), *öxl* (shoulder), and *ás* (shoulder) are all used to describe particular landforms.

Land is the eighth most frequently occurring noun in the sagas (Rögnvaldsson 1990), appearing as a separate term almost 1300 times in all. Examination of all these instances revealed three main conceptions of *land*, each characterised by natural, economic, or social emphases respectively (Figure 6). The empirical approach of the analysis took into account the historical setting of the sagas as narratives of the first settlers in Iceland and their descendants. Although only some of the sagas directly discuss the settlement, it was

commonly accepted by the time they were written that prior to the settlement Iceland had been uninhabited and belonged to no one. This knowledge may facilitate a certain level of understanding of the correlation between the different conceptions of *land*.

Natural aspects

Referring to land as natural is by far the most common usage of the term. This conception is not homogeneous, however, but varies in the texts.

Land, in the meaning of *dry land*, is prominent in most of the sagas. This is land that is sighted after days at sea, or disappears below the horizon, appearing to submerge into the sea behind when one is heading for the open ocean. Sometimes this land is known, and at other times it is unknown, unrecognised, or even unsettled. Land in these terms is contrasted with sea, as the phrase *landa í milli* (in between lands) captures when referring to navigation over the ocean. It relates to the common understanding that the surface of the earth is all either dry or wet. Examples of the comparison between *land* and *sea* are recurrent in the texts, especially when the scene of the narratives draws closer to the shoreline. In some cases, this is apparent when the narrator wants to clarify the position of different characters, i.e. whether they are situated on land or sea. For the same purpose, *land* and *ship* are sometimes contrasted, as in the following example: ‘And when Gísli has embarked on ship, Þorkell stands on land’⁴⁰ (*Gísla saga Súrssonar* 1943, 78). Also there are several phrases that describe the movement from sea or ship to and from land.

Once the ‘scene’ moves towards the shoreline, the conception of land as natural takes on a new guise. Land is no longer just *dry land* as opposed to sea, but a *land mass* occupying space. This conceptual variation is revealed in instances where islands and skerries are differentiated from land, whereas they are otherwise referred to as land in the meaning of dry land. When land is conceptualised as land mass, seafarers sail along the land, most often in a specific direction that is identified. The spatial sensation is then heightened with the phrases *á land upp* (up on the land), and *ofan af landi* (from the land above), sometimes used to describe the movement between land and shore, indicating the morphological rise of the land above sea level. These phrases are limited to accounts of events taking place on or close to the shore. As a land mass occupying space, the land acquires form. Being positioned within this space, whether on sea or land, gives a new perspective from where the shape of the land may now be described. The land may thus be portrayed as mountainous, hilly, or flat, for example. When referring to the coastline, the land may be depicted as jagged, or fjords may be said to be cut into the land. Descriptions of the land’s surface also fall into this category, e.g. barren land, wooded land, swampy land, grassy land, and watery land. In addition, various instances show that land may be identified by its natural features.

Being positioned on land brings out yet another perspective: the land itself becomes a *space* through which one can travel back and forth, irrespective of its natural features.

⁴⁰ ‘Ok er Gísli er á skip kominn, stendr Þorkell á landi.’

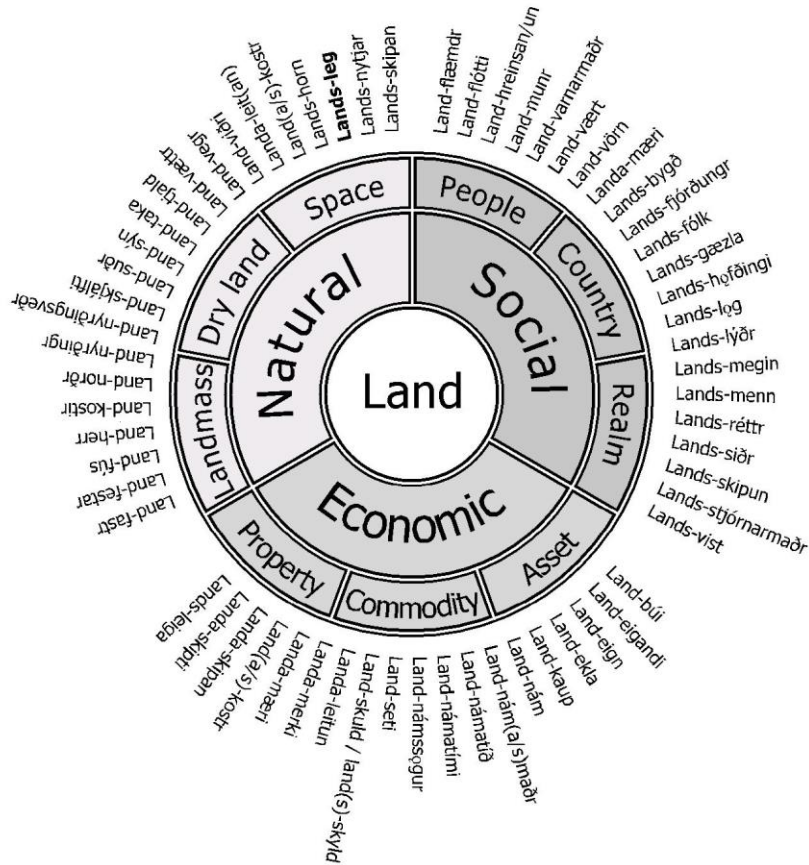


Figure 6 The three main conceptions of the term land, as they appear in the sagas of Icelanders, and their subcategories, surrounded by compound words identified in the sagas that have land as their first component.

Thus people simply walk or ride across the land, from east to west, and so forth, also people are located in some particular parts of the land, whether northern, southern, eastern, or western. In accounts where this usage of the term appears, the focus is not on the land itself, but on location, distances, movement, and relocation, for which the natural land serves as an essential backdrop.

Conceiving of land as natural refers to land that is independent of human existence, but the conceptual variations may only be explained by differing human perceptions. This relates directly to the bodily position of humans in the world (Merleau-Ponty 2004 [1948]), the diverse relations each position brings about, and how the world is thus revealed in different ways.

Economic aspects

Að nema land (to take land, i.e. to take possession of land as a settler) is a recurrent phrase found in most of the sagas, and is used to describe the conduct of the first settlers when they arrived in Iceland, e.g. how they appropriated land that hitherto belonged to no one by defining its boundaries and claiming rightful ownership. The Icelandic term for settlement

is *landnám*, which translates literally as the *taking of land*. Arguably, the process of taking land involves the creation of a different conception of land, namely land as *property*, which relates to its economic value rather than its natural features. It is important here to note that land tenure in Iceland was never feudal; on the contrary, from early on land was privately owned and allodial (Hastrup 1985; A.V. Óskarsdóttir 2007). However, land tenure at that time may have differed from our present-day understanding of the concept and included not only the land itself, but also rights to use other people's land (A.V. Óskarsdóttir 2007).

Land as property is land that one owns and names. It is the place where one makes one's living, builds houses, cultivates the soil, and grazes one's livestock. As property, land can be inherited, divided, gifted, controlled, and defended. The quality of the land in the sagas was mostly evaluated in terms of farming and fishing.

Many of the first settlers took large lands, but as the settlement progressed, the lands that were taken became smaller. At some point in time there was no land left to take. New settlers had to buy land and a slightly different conception of land emerges: land as a *commodity* that is priced, bought and sold, exchanged for other land, or rented. Thus, land conceived of in economic terms was not only the source for daily living in terms of food and clothes, but could also become a source of financial income.

The economic aspect of land is heightened where land is equated with money. *Land og lausir aurar* (land and loose coins) and similar phrases that appear in some of the sagas indicate that land was not just any commodity but one of the prime assets of the time, together with money and livestock, and as such it could be used for bartering.

An economic conception of land has very dissimilar connotations from a conception of land as natural, although it is arguably based on land as land mass. Underlying values are utilitarian, and these explain the conceptual variations, because land can be put to different uses.

Social aspects

The conception of land that highlights its societal features is the most heterogeneous of the three aspects of land. In most of the sagas there are instances where the term land is used to signify what today might be referred to as a *country*, i.e. a distinct area inhabited by a group of people, or a nation. The phrase *að byggja land* (to build a land) denotes that land is brought to existence by settlement, suggesting the inseparability of an area and its people. Therefore, when the term land is used in terms of a country, reference is made not only to the area it covers, but also simultaneously to the people who inhabit it. The renowned saying 'with law shall our land be built, but not with lawlessness wasted'⁴¹ (*Brennu-Njáls*

⁴¹ 'Með lögum skal land vart byggja, en eigi með ólögum eyða.' *Brennu-Njáls saga* (the *Saga of Burnt Njáll*) has been preserved in various parchment manuscripts, although none in its entirety, the oldest of which date back to the year 1300. While the first half of the saying quoted here is identical in all of the manuscripts, there are at least four variations of the second half of the saying. The one used here is in accordance with the *Gráskinna* manuscript (Sveinsson 1954). This saying appears also in *Járnsíða*, the lawbook of Icelanders in 1271–1281, and later appeared in *Brennu-Njáls saga*. *Járnsíða*, on the other hand, takes this saying from the *Frostathing law* in Norway.

saga 1954, 172) offers a deeper understanding, because it unveils the contextual dependency of culture and society, suggesting even that land can cease to exist. With reference to the first part of the saying, Olwig (2002) has argued that land in the sense of a country (and hence landscape) was created by abiding by the law, which might be understood as if the creation of land and landscape was conditional upon the law. The meaning of the saying, however, partially relies on how the verb *skulu* (shall) is interpreted (Cleasby & Vigfusson 1975 [1874]); rather than denoting law as a condition for creating land, the verb implies a moral duty to follow the law of the land. Hence, land without law is possible, but not desirable.

Arguably, the social aspect of land as a country gives it a cultural identity, and thus it becomes possible to speak of different lands: ‘And on the eighth day of Yule Earl Eiríkr made payment to his men, as is the custom of rulers in other lands’⁴² (*Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa* 1938, 117).

The conception of land as a country in the sagas is complicated, as there are differences according to whether the land under discussion is Iceland or a foreign country. For example, when situated in Iceland, any given character would say *hér á landi* (here on land), but when situated abroad they would say *hér í landi* (here in land).⁴³ Similarly, with reference to leaving the country one goes *af landi* (of the land) when in Iceland, whereas one goes *úr landi* (out of the land) when abroad.⁴⁴ By comparison, one goes *frá landi* (from the land) when referring to land as natural. Clearly, the reason for this difference in terminology, between leaving Iceland or a different country, is that Iceland is an island and not part of a continental land mass. Why is reference thus implicitly made to natural features of the land, while still conceiving of land as a *country*? The answer to this question may offer a glimpse of what it meant to be an Icelander in the Middle Ages (Hastrup 2008).

As described in *Landnámabók* (1968), Iceland was named after its natural features prior to the settlement, and not after a nation or a group of people who lived in the area, as was often the case in other countries in Europe (Olwig 1994; Brink 2008). The *land* in *Ísland* (Iceland) thus corresponds to natural features of the land, rather than to its social aspect; it is the land of ice. Although Iceland became a country once it had been settled, that does not account for its naming. Iceland differs fundamentally from other European countries in that its settlement is recorded and accounted for, and hence also its emergence as a country, whereas most other regions of Europe have been inhabited since prehistoric times. The case of Iceland is also unusual for other reasons. From the settlement in the 9th century until 1262, there was no head of state, neither a king nor any other type of ruler. Instead, the Icelandic Commonwealth was formed in 930 AD with the establishment of *Alþingi* (the national parliament), composed of representatives from all parts of the country. What both defined and united Icelanders was simply the island they all inhabited. The boundaries of Iceland as a country were never negotiated or fought over, but coincided with the natural boundaries marked by sea. Hence, it is not always clear in accounts relating to Iceland

⁴² ‘Ok inn átta dag jóla gaf Eiríkr jarl mála monnum sínum, sem siðr er höfðingja til í þórum löndum.’

⁴³ The use of prepositions in these terms is consistent throughout the texts of the sagas, with very few exceptions.

⁴⁴ To ‘go out of a land’, *fara úr landi*, is only used when abroad, while to ‘go of a land’, *fara af landi*, may refer either to Iceland or a foreign country.

whether a reference is made to land as *land mass* or land as a *country*. Although this represents an analytical problem more than anything else, one of the sagas contains an example of a misdetection between these two conceptual variations, which underpins this analysis:

And this have men said that Ingjaldr gave the most to Gísli which was of greatest gain to him; and it is said that when Þorgrímr Nose worked his sorcery and said that it would not be of assistance to Gísli though men sheltered him here on land; but the thought did not occur to him to stipulate the outlying islands, and therefore this lasted a little longer although it could not last forever.⁴⁵ (*Gísli saga Súrssonar* 1943, 84)

Arguably, the small islands surrounding Iceland pertain to the land in terms of a country, but the islands are excluded from the conception of land in terms of a land mass.

In a few instances the term land is used as a synonym for *realm*, to emphasise the domain of a monarch over a defined territory or a country. A king may thus be said to rule his land or defend his land, i.e. a reference is made to the land as belonging to the king. This usage is limited to accounts describing events abroad.

Clearly, there is an interrelation between the conception of land as a *realm* and the conception of land as a *country* when referring to countries other than Iceland. Whereas within Iceland land connotes the association of a society with *dry land*, in reference to other countries it indicates the association of a society with a *realm*.

Lastly, there are a few examples where the term land is used to refer to the *people* of a distinct area. These examples concern behaviour or belief that supposedly applies to all inhabitants of the country. In these terms, the land referred to can be heathen, just as the land can become Christian.

The analysis presented above, with its historical approach, suggests that the primordial conception of land appears to refer to its natural features. Before the settlement of Iceland the land there was unrelated to social and/or economic features. Accordingly, the land was essentially natural, and as such formed the basis for land to be comprehended either economically or socially. This conclusion, however, should not be read as absolute, as it should be kept in mind that the texts of the sagas first and foremost reflect the conceptual world of the people who wrote them in the 13th and 14th centuries. The texts do not necessarily correspond to the way people thought during and immediately after the settlement. The analysis therefore does not show the original meaning of the term land in Icelandic, or how the conception of land became altered in the mind of the settlers. However, the analysis does show that in 13th and 14th centuries in Iceland land could be visualised as purely natural, unrelated to social and/or economic features.

⁴⁵ ‘Ok þat hafa menn mælt, at Ingjaldr hafi Gísli mest veitt ok þat at mestu gagni orðit; ok þat er sagt, at þá er Þorgrímr nef gerði seiðinn, at hann mælti svá fyrir, at Gísli skyldi ekki at gagni verða, þó at menn byrgi honum hér á landi; en þat kom honum eigi í hug at skilja til um úteyjar, og endisk því þetta hóti lengst, þótt eigi yrði þess álangdar auðit.’

Examples of *landsleg*

Landsleg is one of several compounds in the sagas that have land as their first component (Figure 6; Table 2). *Landsleg* appears eight times in six distinct sagas. Comparison of frequency of use between these compounds reveals that *landsleg* is not particularly rare in the texts. It is used more often than the majority of the terms: of 61 only 5 are more frequent. The different meanings of the concept of land accompany the element ‘land’ as part of compound words. In the following sections I examine all the examples of *landsleg* in standard editions of the sagas.

Færeyinga saga

The term *landsleg* appears in *Færeyinga saga* (the Saga of the Faroe Islanders), which, despite describing events in the Faroe Islands in the 10th and 11th centuries, was written in Iceland. Furthermore, as it shares some characteristics with the sagas of Icelanders it is sometimes classified as such.

Færeyinga saga has not been preserved as an individual saga but in disconnected sections interpolated in the sagas of *Ólafr Tryggvason* and *Ólafr helgi Haraldsson*. Different parts of the saga are thus preserved in different manuscripts, sometimes in dissimilar versions. The term *landsleg* is found in one version of the saga, which is preserved in the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript (GKS 1005 fol). The part of *Flateyjarbók* that contains the various sections of *Færeyinga saga* is thought to have been written in 1387 (S. Nordal 1944). Parts of this version, including the one where *landsleg* appears, are taken from an older manuscript of *Færeyinga saga* that has since perished, but was most likely originally written between 1210 and 1215 (Ó. Halldórsson 1987).

Færeyinga saga portrays Sigmundr Brestisson and Þrándr í Gøtu, and conflicts between them related to the conversion to Christianity in the Faroe Islands. The following quotation describes the arrival of Sigmundr and his men to the islands, after a stay in Norway:

Now to tell of Sigmundr and the others, a fair wind comes their way and they sail towards the islands, and see then that they are approaching the islands from the east, and Sigmundr and his men recognise the *landsleg*, and they have come near to Eysturoy.⁴⁶ (*Færeyinga saga* 2006, 52; my italics)

Being positioned on sea and approaching land that arises from sea level, Sigmundr and his men identify the land in front of them as Eysturoy. The experience is clearly visual and according to the circumstances it most probably relates to the natural features of the land – how the land is shaped, and its position and location in space.

⁴⁶ ‘Nú er at segja frá þeim Sigmundi at byrr kemr á fyrir þeim ok sigla nú at eyjunum, ok sjá þá at þeir eru komnir austan at Eyjum, ok eru þeir menn á með Sigmundi at kenna landsleg, ok eru þeir mjök komnir at Austrey.’

Table 2 A list of compound words identified in the sagas of Icelanders that have land as their first component, showing a reference to the conception of land in each (see. Figure 6; E – Economic, N – Natural, S - Social), and their number of appearances; the English translation partly relies on Cleasby & Vigfusson (1975[1874]) and Fritzner (1973[1867]).

Term and definition	Land	N
<i>land-búi</i> , n. – a tenant	E	1
<i>land-eigandi</i> , n. – a landowner	E	1
<i>land-eign</i> , n. – land that is owned	E	7
<i>land-ekla</i> , n. – lack of land	E	1
<i>land-fastr</i> , adj. – firmly fixed or attached to land (of a ship)	N	6
<i>land-festar</i> , n.pl. – moorings	N	3
<i>land-flótti</i> , adj. – fled from the land	S	3
<i>land-flæmdr</i> , adj. – driven off / out of the land	S	1
<i>land-fús</i> , adj. – eager to make the land (of sailors)	N	1
<i>land-herr</i> , n. – land troops	N	3
<i>land-hreinsan/un</i> , n. – land cleansing (of miscreants)	S	5
<i>land-kaup</i> , n. – the purchase of land	E	7
<i>land-kostir</i> , n.pl. – the qualities, resources of the land	N	5
<i>land-munr</i> , n. – ‘longing for the land’, home-sickness	S	1
<i>land-nám</i> , n. – 1) the taking of land (as a settler), settlement 2) the land appropriated (by a settler)	E	11
<i>land-nám(a/s)maðr</i> , n. – a settler	E	14
<i>land-námatíð</i> , n. – the time of the settlement	E	2
<i>land-námatími</i> , n. – the time of the settlement	E	1
<i>land-námssögur</i> , n.pl. – stories of the settlement	E	1
<i>land-norðr</i> , n. – ‘land-north’, north-east	N	5
<i>land-nyrðingr</i> , n. – north-east wind	N	6
<i>land-nyrðingsveðr</i> , n. – north-east wind	N	1
<i>land-seti</i> , n. – a tenant	E	15
<i>land-skjálfti</i> , n. – an earthquake	N	2
<i>land-skuld / land(s)-skyld</i> , n. – rent of land	E	6
<i>land-suðr</i> , n. – ‘land-south’, south-east	N	8
<i>land-sýn</i> , n. – the sight of land	N	4
<i>land-taka</i> , n. – a landing	N	8
<i>land-tjald</i> , n. – a tent pitched ashore when in harbour	N	2
<i>land-varnarmaðr</i> , n. – a man charged with the defence of a country	S	5
<i>land-vegr</i> , n. – a way by land	N	2
<i>land-viðri</i> , n. – land wind	N	1
<i>land-vært</i> , adj. – to have residence in the country open to one	S	1
<i>land-vættir</i> , n. – the guardian spirit of the land	N	2
<i>land-vörn</i> , n. – the defence of the land	S	5
<i>land(a/s)-kostir</i> , n. – the qualities, resources of the land, possession of land	N, E	29
<i>landa-leit(an)</i> , n. – a journey to discover land	N	2
<i>landa-leitun</i> , n. – to search for land (for appropriation)	E	1
<i>landa-merki</i> , n. – boundaries (of an estate)	E	6
<i>landa-mæri</i> , n. – borderland (of either an estate or a country)	E, S	4
<i>landa-skipan</i> , n. – arrangement of lands (of estates)	E	1
<i>landa-skipti</i> , n. – a division of land	E	2
<i>lands-bygð</i> , n. – the peopled land	S	2
<i>lands-fjórðungur</i> , n. – quarter of the land (of Iceland)	S	5
<i>lands-fólk</i> , n. – inhabitants of the land	S	2
<i>lands-gæzla</i> , n. – the guarding or defence of the land	S	1
<i>lands-horn</i> , n. – ‘the corner of the land’, the land’s end	N	1
<i>lands-höfðingi</i> , n. – a great chief of the land	S	2
<i>lands-leg</i> , n. – ‘the lie of the land’, landscape	N	8
<i>lands-leiga</i> , n. – land rent	E	1
<i>lands-lög</i> , n. – the law of the land	S	4
<i>lands-lýðr</i> , n. – people of the land	S	1
<i>lands-megin</i> , n. – the power of the land	S	1
<i>lands-menn</i> , n.pl. – inhabitants of the land	S	28
<i>lands-nytjar</i> , n.pl. – the produce of the land	N	2
<i>lands-réttir</i> , n. – the law of the land, public law	S	5
<i>lands-siðr</i> , n. – the custom of the land	S	1
<i>lands-skipan</i> , n. – arrangement of land	N	1
<i>lands-skipun</i> , n. – order(custom) of the land	S	1
<i>lands-stjórnarmaðr</i> , n. – a public authority	S	1
<i>lands-vist</i> , n. – right or permission to reside in a land	S	6

Vatnsdæla saga

The term *landsleg* appears three times in *Vatnsdæla saga* (the Saga of the Vatnsdælir), written in the 13th century, probably no later than 1270 (Sveinsson 1939). This saga was one of many that were found in *Vatnshyrna*, a parchment manuscript from the late 14th century (S. Karlsson 1970), which unfortunately perished in the fire of Copenhagen in 1728. If it were not for paper copies made of parts of *Vatnshyrna* in the 17th century, the content of this saga would now be a mystery, as it has not been preserved as a whole in any other medieval manuscript. Of the few copies that exist, two are more prominent than the others (AM 138 fol, 1640, and AM 559 4^o, 1686–1699), as they were most probably copied directly from *Vatnshyrna*. In places, these two manuscripts differ in their wording. The standard edition is primarily based on the latter manuscript, with some regard to the former (Ólsen 1937–1939; Sveinsson 1939).

Vatnsdæla saga is set mainly in Northwest Iceland, in the years between c.900 and the early 11th century. It is fundamentally a family saga as it describes Ingimundr gamli, who settled in the valley *Vatnsdalur*, and his descendants. The story commences in Norway, and early on there is a description of Ingimundr reflecting on a possible relocation to Iceland. In order to examine the setting beforehand he decides to send for three Finns.⁴⁷

Ingimundr says he wants to make a deal with them ‘and I will give you butter and tin, but you shall do my errand to Iceland and search for my amulet and report back to me about the *landsleg*’.⁴⁸ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 34; my italics)

The three Finns comply with his wish and depart for Iceland, albeit not in the flesh but in spirit, while they are shut indoors for three days and nights. Afterwards they describe their journey to Ingimundr. Their description of the *landsleg* is in terms of morphological features of the land:

We came to a land where three fjords opened up to the north-east, and beyond one of the fjords there were great waters. Then we came to a long valley and there at the foot of a mountain were some hills, there was a habitable hillside, and there in one of the hills was the amulet.⁴⁹ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 35)

Later, the story describes Ingimundr – who was by then already in Iceland – seeking land on which to settle. His journey brings him to *Vatnsdalur* and, as he approaches the valley to the north-east, he gazes over it and says:

The Finns’ prophecy must be coming true, for I now recognise the *landsleg* from their account of it, hither we are being directed, and things are now getting much better; I see now extensive land and if it is accompanied by

⁴⁷ In Icelandic medieval texts the term Finns refers to the Sami but not to the people of Finland. The Finns were notorious for sorcery.

⁴⁸ ‘Ingimundr segir, at hann vill kaupa at þeim, – “ok vil ek gefa yðr smjör og tin, en þér farið sendiferð mína til Íslands at leita eptir hlut mínum og segja mér frá landslegi”.’

⁴⁹ ‘Þar kómu vér á land, sem þrír firðir gengu af landnorðri ok vötn váru mikil fyrir innan einn fjörðinn. Síðan kómu vér í dal einn djúpan, ok í dalnum undir fjalli einu váru holt nokkur; þar var byggiligr hvammr, ok þar í holtinu qöru var hluturinn.’

resources, then perhaps this is a good site to build.⁵⁰ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 41; my italics)

Like Sigmundr in *Færeyinga saga*, Ingimundr recognises the land that lies in front of him, although not by former experience, but based on the Finns' description of diverse landforms. Arguably, this example shows that the term *landsleg* not only refers to the landforms per se, but also to their relative positions and the total appearance resulting from them. The story continues and describes the settlement of Ingimundr and his people:

Then the team moved up the valley and saw that there were good resources from the land with regard to grass and wood; there was beautiful to look around; people then felt in a much better mood. ... Ingimundr chose his dwelling in a very beautiful hollow and established a farm.⁵¹ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 41–42)

In the above quotation, the aesthetic appreciation of the land under discussion, previously referred to as *landsleg*, is noteworthy.

The third occurrence of the term is found later in the story. The narrative is now centred on the sons of Ingmundr, Þorsteinn, and Jökull, who at this point in the story are fighting with an old hag named Ljót and her son named Hrolleifr. After Jökull had killed Hrolleifr and thus prevented Ljót from carrying out her plot, Ljót informs them of the fate she had planned for them:

She said she had intended to turn the whole *landslag*⁵² upside down, 'and then you would have run mad with terror out among the wild beasts, and that is what would have happened had you not seen me before I saw you'⁵³ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 70; my italics)

What *landslag* refers to in this particular case is hard to say, except that it seems to imply the surface of the land. The metaphoric description calls to mind a natural disaster of some kind.

⁵⁰ 'Sú mun sannask spáin Finnanna, því at nú kenni ek landsleg at frásögn þeira, at hér mun oss at vísat, ok vænkask nú mjök; ek sé nú ok land at viðleika með vexti, ok ef þar fylgja kostir, þá má vera, at hér sé vel byggjanda.'

⁵¹ 'Síðan sótti liðit upp í dalinn ok sá þar góða landakosti at grösom ok skógum; var fagrt um at litask; lypti þá mjök brúnum manna. ... Ingimundr kaus sér bústað í hvammi einum mjök fögnum ok efnaði til bæjar.'

⁵² In all editions of *Vatnsdæla saga*, this third occurrence of the term is spelled *landslag* rather than *landsleg*. This is in accordance with the manuscript AM 559 4^o (1686–1699). The difference in spelling between this particular example and all other examples of the term in the sagas, may arguably be explained by inaccuracy in transcription. Different reasons support this: (1) the spelling of this particular example is inconsistent within the few 17th century paper manuscripts that either directly or indirectly originate from *Vatnshyrna*. In some of them the spelling is with an 'e' (see AM 138 fol (1640); AM 163 a fol (1650–1682); AM 158 fol (1650); JS 28 fol (1660)); (2) the transition from *landsleg* to *landslag* had already begun in the 17th century when the copies were made of the *Vatnshyrna* manuscript; and (3) the spelling *landslag* does not occur in any of the 14th century manuscripts. I therefore argue that there are various reasons to believe that the original spelling in this third example in *Vatnsdæla saga* was *landsleg* rather than *landslag*.

⁵³ 'Hon kvazk hafa ætlat at snúa þar um landslagi ollu, – "en þér ærðizk allir ok yrðið at gjalti eptir á vegum úti með villidýrum, ok svá myndi ok gengit hafa, ef þér hefðið mik eigi fyrr sét en ek yðr".'

Laxdæla saga

Laxdæla saga (the Saga of the Laxdælir), written originally in the mid-13th century, has been preserved as a whole in *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol), a parchment manuscript written in the period between 1330 and 1370, and on which the standard edition is mostly based (Sveinsson 1934).

Laxdæla saga spans two centuries, from c.860 to c.1060. The saga takes place primarily in western Iceland, although parts of the story are set in Norway and the British Isles. The saga gives an account of settlers in the region *Dalir* and their descendants, many of whom lived in the valley Laxárdalur. *Laxdæla saga* is not least a story of the love and fate of Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir and her four husbands. Guðrún's second husband was Þórðr Ingunnarson, who had been drowned at sea as a result of sorcery. One of the perpetrators was Stígandi, who was also responsible for other evil acts, for which he had to pay with his life. His execution is narrated in the saga. At the particular point in time quoted below, a bag has been pulled over his head in order to avoid the evil look in his eyes:

Stígandi awoke at this and offers no resistance, for now there were many men against one. A slit was in the bag and Stígandi can see the hillside on one side; there was beautiful *landsleg* and grassy; but it was as if a whirlwind came; turned the earth upside down so that never again did grass come up there.⁵⁴
(*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 109; my italics)

What the word *landsleg* refers to in this particular example is not clear, except that a reference is made to form (hillside), and texture (grassy), both visual features of the land's surface. Unlike other mentions of the term *landsleg* in the sagas, here *landsleg* has no function for what is happening in the story. Stígandi certainly does not take the opportunity to admire the beauty of the land at this particular moment in his life, and neither does he have the opportunity to describe his experience of it, as he is stoned to death just few moments later. The remark on the beautiful *landsleg* is in complete contrast to the bloody account. This is clearly a rhetorical device which the author uses to emphasise the power concealed in the sorcerous look of Stígandi. By his glance alone, he is able to transform a beautiful and grassy *landsleg* into scorched ground. This ability is similar to that described in the third example from *Vatnsdæla saga*, when Ljót intends to turn the whole *landsleg* upside down, as noted also by Kress (2008). In both cases, sorcery causes the *landsleg* to be transformed, and the consequences are likened to a natural disaster. This implies that *landsleg* was regarded as something humans could generally not modify.

Eiríks saga rauða

A far better example of the meaning lying behind the term *landsleg* is found in *Eiríks saga rauða* (the Saga of Erik the Red). This saga has been preserved in two parchment manuscripts: *Skálholtsbók* (AM 557 4°, 1420–1450), and *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4°, 1302–1310), both of which are compilations of diverse narratives. Both manuscripts copied the

⁵⁴ 'Stígandi vaknaði við þetta ok bregðr nú engum viðbrögðum, því at margir menn váru nú um einn. Rauf var á belgnum, ok getr Stígandi sét qðrum megin í hliðina; þar var fagrt landsleg ok grasloðit; en því var líkast, sem hvirfílvindr komi at; sneri um jörðunni, svá at aldregi síðan kom þar gras upp.'

saga from an older manuscript that has since perished. The saga must have been first written before the turn of the 14th century, and probably in the early 13th century (Ó. Halldórsson 1985). The two manuscripts differ strikingly in their wording, although the storyline is the same, and therefore there are two standard editions of the saga.

The saga tells of the settlement of Erik the Red in Greenland and the discovery of new lands in the west. It centres on an expedition from Greenland to *Vínland* (Wineland, probably Newfoundland). Both the journey and lands that the expedition encountered are described. The following quotation describes the time when the expedition reached a fjord, where they decided to stay:

They called it Straumfjördr. They carried the cargo from their ships and prepared to stay. They had with them all kinds of livestock. *There was beautiful landsleg.* They paid attention to nothing other than exploring the land.⁵⁵ (*Eiríks saga rauða* 1935, 224; my italics)

From this quotation alone, taken from the *Hauksbók* manuscript, it is not clear what the word *landsleg* refers to exactly, although it apparently concerns some features of the land that were appealing. The same passage in the *Skálholtsbók* manuscript, however, gives an unexpected insight into the meaning of the term:

They headed up the fjord and called it Straumsfjördr and carried the cargo from the ships and prepared to stay. They had with them all kinds of livestock and searched for resources from the land. *There were mountains and beautiful to look around.* They paid no attention to things other than exploring the land. There the grass grew tall.⁵⁶ (*Eiríks saga rauða – Texti Skálholtsbókar* AM 557 4to 1985, 424–425; my italics)

The *Skálholtsbók* manuscript is believed to be closer to the original text, despite being more recent. The wording of the text in the *Hauksbók* manuscript is believed to have been amended; it is more concise, particularly the sections written by Haukr Erlendsson (c.1260–1334), after whom the manuscript is named (Jansson 1945). The above quotation from the *Hauksbók* manuscript was written by Haukr Erlendsson himself (Reeves 1890; S. Karlsson 1964; Ó. Halldórsson 1985). Thus, presumably in the first decade of the 14th century, Haukr Erlendsson rephrased the text from ‘there were mountains and beautiful to look around’, to ‘there was beautiful *landsleg*’.

In *Eiríks saga rauða* the word *landsleg* clearly refers to the total appearance of the land, and particularly mountains in that context, and thus corresponds to the modern lexical definition. The *landsleg* is described as beautiful, as in the example from *Laxdæla saga*.

⁵⁵ ‘Þeir kǫlluðu þar Straumfjörð. Þeir báru þar farm af skipum sínum ok bjuggusk þar um. Þeir höfðu með sér alls konar fænað. Þar var fagrt landsleg; þeir gáðu einskis, útan at kanna landit.’

⁵⁶ ‘Þeir heldu inn með firðinum ok kǫlluðu hann Straumsfjörð ok báru farminn af skipunum ok bjuggusk þar um. Þeir höfðu með sér alls konar fænað ok leituðu sér þar landsnytja. Fjöll voru þar, ok fagrt var þar um at litask. Þeir gáðu einskis nema at kanna landit. Þar váru grǫs mikil.’

Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu

In *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* (the Saga of Reykðælir and Killer-Skúta), the term *landsleg* is used in a less lucid context. Part of this saga, including the section where the term *landsleg* appears, has been preserved in a parchment manuscript (AM 561 4^o) that dates back to c.1400. It is thought that this saga was originally written in the mid-13th century (Sigfússon 1940).

Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu is mainly set in the region of the valley of *Reykjadalur* and Lake *Mývatn* in northern Iceland during the second half of the 10th century. The story features three main characters, one of which is Áskell, a chieftain of great wisdom who lived in *Reykjadalur*. The story tells of a journey he made from his home to a neighbouring region. The beginning of his journey is described as follows:

And now they go, until they come to a place called Leyningsbakki. And then Áskell said that he wanted to be buried there, when he died, and thought there was a good *landsleg*, and said, he did not want to have money with him.⁵⁷
(*Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* 1940, 198; my italics)

The narrative contains no further information on what Áskell was referring to, or on what *landsleg* is, what makes it good, or why it was a desirable place in which to be buried. A more thorough reading, however, may offer some insight.

The toponym *Leyningsbakki* can no longer be found, but if it ever existed it may arguably have referred to an elevated bank of gravel situated within Áskell's farmland, from where there is a picturesque view of the canyon of the *Laxá* river upstream, and its grassy riverbanks downstream (Björn Sigfússon's explanatory footnote in *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* 1940, 198). This may be relevant if this statement of Áskell's is to be read literally. Then again, it might also be seen as a portent of his fate, and the toponym *Leyningsbakki* a work of fiction for that purpose; to nobody's knowledge, Áskell was on the brink of his death when he uttered the words quoted above. The narrative continues and describes how the day after, when he had arrived in the neighbouring region, he received an injury that would lead to his death. The literal translation of *Leyningsbakki* is 'bank of hiding', and Áskell's murderer did indeed hide under the bank of a river before attacking him. Before dying, Áskell managed to return to his home in *Reykjadalur*, where he was buried. Either way, the term *landsleg* seems to point to a location in Áskell's home region, which he appears to have held in affection, and possibly to a site with an outstanding vista.

⁵⁷ 'Ok nú fara þeir, þar til er þeir koma þar, sem heitir Leyningsbakki. Ok þá mælti Áskell, at þar vildi hann vera grafinn, þá er hann andaðisk, ok þótti þar vera gott landslag, og sagði, at hann vildi ekki fé hafa með sér.' Note that the spelling '*landslag*' in this edition is not in accordance with the 14th century manuscript, in which the term is spelled '*landsleg*'. Other editions use the spelling '*landsleg*' (see for example, Halldórsson et al., 1987; *Íslendingasögur*, 1830). Hence, I have changed the spelling from '*landslag*' to '*landsleg*' in the translation.

Króka-Refs saga

A final example of *landsleg* in *Króka-Refs saga* (the Saga of Ref the Sly). The saga is thought to have been written before the mid-14th century, and has been preserved as a whole in one parchment manuscript (AM 471 4^o) that dates back to the 15th century (J. Halldórsson 1959). *Króka-Refs saga* narrates the life and adventures of Refr Steinsson, and how, by means of his cleverness and craftsmanship, he managed to get out of challenging circumstances that he often found himself in, usually after having killed someone. The term *landsleg* appears in an indirect relation to one such event.

On one occasion Refr had fled to the wilderness of northern Greenland to hide from the revenge of Bárðr and Gunnar, the latter being a kinsman of five men whom Refr had slain. There, he built himself a fortress. Having discovered the whereabouts of Refr in the wilderness, Bárðr and Gunnar tried to capture him, but had to withdraw. They decided therefore to seek the advice of Haraldr Sigurðarson, king of Norway, regarding the matter. The following quotation is taken from a conversation between Bárðr and the king, after Bárðr had described their failed mission:

The king asks how the *landsleg* there was fashioned. Bárðr tells him so accurately.⁵⁸ (*Króka-Refs saga* 1959, 144; my italics)

Unfortunately, the accurate description of the *landsleg* does not follow in the narrative. At first sight, this example seems therefore not to offer an insight into the meaning of the term. However, on the presumption that *landsleg* here alludes to natural features of the land, as in all the other instances where the term is used, and since the narrative had already described Refr's location in detail, some assumptions may be made.

When Refr first arrived in Greenland, he is said to have come to a fjord that cuts deep into the land. Within it he found another fjord, cutting even deeper into the land, where he later hid. The natural features of this area are described as follows:

The hillsides were grown with forest and the slopes green. Glaciers enclosed all on both sides.⁵⁹ (*Króka-Refs saga* 1959, 132)

The narrative describes Bárðr's arrival at the same spot as follows:

He saw another fjord opening up, large and long, and there he saw a valley, beautiful and large, extending up towards the mountains.⁶⁰ (*Króka-Refs saga* 1959, 140)

This natural setting is what the narrative later refers to as *landsleg*. As with some of the previous examples, different landforms are significant in the context, and aesthetic appreciation is involved once again.

⁵⁸ 'Konungur spyrr, hversu þar væri landslegi háttat. Bárðr segir þat inniliga.'

⁵⁹ 'Skógi var vaxit allt um hliðir ok grænar brekkur. Jöklar girtu þar um allt báðumegin.'

⁶⁰ 'Hann sá, hvar annarr fjörðr hófst upp, mikill og langr, ok þar sá hann dal ganga upp at fjöllum, fagran ok mikinn.'

On the meaning and embedded connotations of *landsleg*

The results of the analysis presented thus far in this article can now be summarised on the basis of the eight instances where the term *landsleg* is used in standard editions of the sagas. In most, if not all, of these instances, there are either direct or indirect indications that *landsleg* is morphological. The term refers to mountains, hills, valleys, and other landforms in combination and/or mutual interaction. Where particular landforms are not indicated, the term appears to refer to the land's surface in general and/or local conditions with regard to natural features of the land. There is also a strong indication that *landsleg* is visual; in four sagas (*Færeyinga saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Eiríks saga rauða*) *landsleg* is clearly something one looks at, regardless of whether one is situated on sea or land. Other perceptions are not mentioned. The implication that *landsleg* is independent of human actions appears twice (*Vatnsdæla saga* and *Laxdæla saga*), and none of the other instances suggests the contrary. Furthermore, none of the instances suggests an economic or a social connotation regarding the land under discussion. Conversely, in the cases of *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, and *Króka-Refs saga*, the term *landsleg* refers to land that is uninhabited and belongs to no one. As for the other cases, land tenure is irrelevant.

Based on the analysis above I argue that the first component of *landsleg* refers to natural features of the land, or to land as land mass, and its morphological character in particular. This contrasts with Olwig's account of the meaning of 'land' in the term landscape. The second component, *leg*, refers to its spatial arrangement; hence, it emphasises the relative location of different landforms towards each other and their interplay. *Leg* translates into *lie*, as in how and where something or someone lies. Accordingly, *landsleg* translates into *lie of the land*.

Relations to aesthetic appreciation

The association of beauty with *landsleg* cannot be left unmentioned. An aesthetic appreciation of *landsleg* is specifically referred to in two sagas (*Laxdæla saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*), while two others (*Vatnsdæla saga* and *Króka-Refs saga*) reveal an aesthetic appreciation of land that is also referred to as *landsleg*, and possibly one other (*Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*) hints at the same.

It has been claimed elsewhere (Laxness 1950; Björnsson 1964) that an aesthetic appreciation of nature does not appear in the sagas, although in some instances the wording might suggest otherwise; where natural forms and features are described as visually appealing, the underlying premise is putatively utilitarian. Thus, when green slopes are described as beautiful, it is said to be indicative of a farmer's way of thinking, rather than an aesthetic judgement. Supposedly, it was not until Romanticism gained ground in poetry in the 19th century that Icelanders first learned to appreciate mountains aesthetically, leading to a change in views of nature complemented by the first Icelandic landscape painters in the 20th century. Claims of this kind, which evidently echo historical accounts from the European mainland, have nurtured the somewhat widespread belief that an aesthetic appreciation of nature is a rather recent experience among Icelanders, and

therefore does not need to be taken seriously. Not everyone, however, agrees. Harðarson (1990) has argued that an aesthetic appreciation of nature must have been a shared experience in the Middle Ages as skaldic poetry partly relies on such perception. Þ. Árnason (1994) argues that appreciation of the beauty of nature is a collective faculty shared by all humans, which can either be nurtured or suppressed by culture. The cultural environment in Iceland may have held back an aesthetic appreciation of nature to some extent, but since such experience was not unknown, according to Icelandic medieval texts, then perhaps recent changes in views of nature may partly be regarded as reviving the sense of enchantment Icelanders used to feel for nature in the Middle Ages (Þ. Árnason 2005).

The analysis presented here shows that an aesthetic appreciation of nature was embedded in the consciousness of Icelanders at the time. Moreover, it shows that such experience, with regard to nature's morphology and the interplay of diverse landforms, was expressed with the aid of the term *landsleg*. Green grass is mentioned in four of the sagas in some relation to *landsleg* (*Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, and *Króka-Refs saga*), although not as a quality of the *landsleg* as such, but of the land under discussion. Grass is one of the resources the land has to offer, but it is not the reason for the aesthetic judgement being made in these particular examples. The examples show that when the term *landsleg* is used it is the morphological quality of the land rather than its textural quality that induces an aesthetic response within the onlooker.

Although Iceland was a subsistence society at the time the sagas were written, it is an oversimplification to state that a description of green slopes or grassy land as beautiful necessarily indicates a utilitarian point of view. One might ask whether it would not be tantamount to saying that modern Icelanders are incapable of appreciating the beauty of waterfalls or geothermal areas, given that they harness these natural resources for economic prosperity. Everybody in Iceland makes use of these resources daily, whether in the form of electricity or hot water. Kantian aesthetic theory (Kant 2000 [1790]) emphasises that aesthetic judgements are disinterested, which implies that when something is said to be beautiful it is because it pleases the senses, not that it might be of use to someone. This does not entail that aesthetic judgements cannot be made of useful things, as some have wrongly presumed (for further discussion, see Brady 2003). Describing grassy land as beautiful does not necessarily indicate a utilitarian point of view, even if one is a farmer.

In all but one of the examples from the sagas where the term *landsleg* is used, it refers to land that is not one's home area. Assuming this is not a coincidence, one may question the implications. Taking into account that *landsleg* is also used to denote aesthetic appreciation evoked by morphological qualities of land, this perhaps shows that it is more likely to occur where utilitarian relations are not at the forefront. Although there may be some truth in the claim that green grass hinders farmers in making aesthetic judgements of land, this fails to notice the heterogeneity of past societies and human-land relations.

Origins of the concept of *landsleg*

The manuscripts of the sagas reveal conclusively that the term *landsleg* was in use in the 14th and 15th centuries in Iceland. Conversely, the term appears not to be found at the time in other languages spoken around the North Atlantic or in modern Germanic languages,

apart from Faroese. The oldest mention of *landsleg* in the sagas is in *Eiríks saga rauða* in the *Hauksbók* manuscript, written between 1302 and 1310.⁶¹ None of the sagas mentioned here has been preserved in its original version; all but one were probably first written in the 13th century. Whether the older versions contained the term *landsleg* cannot be known. Comparison of manuscripts shows that wording of the text was often altered; the example of *landsleg* in *Eiríks saga rauða* is a case in point.

However, the term *landsleg* is not limited to the sagas of Icelanders, but is also found in a few other Icelandic medieval manuscripts (*Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* n.d.). The oldest preserved example identified to date is found in the *Morkinskinna* manuscript (GKS 1009), which is an Icelandic chronicle of Norwegian kings in the 11th and 12th centuries, and in all likelihood written in 1275 (Jakobsson & Kristjánsson 2011).

Landnámabók features the term once, in connection with the description of Ingimundr gamli (the same as in *Vatnsdæla saga*) and the Finns' journey to Iceland:

The Finns came back and had found the amulet but could not lay hold of it; they guided Ingimundr in a valley between two hills and told Ingimundr how the whole *landsleg* was fashioned where he should build.⁶² (*Landnámabók* 1968, 218; my italics)

The similarity with *Vatnsdæla saga* is clear and the two texts are undoubtedly related. The question is, which came first? It has been argued elsewhere that when *Landnámabók* was written the author used an early version of *Vatnsdæla saga* as a source for this section (Sveinsson 1939; Benediktsson 1968). If this is correct, it confirms that the use of the term *landsleg* in *Vatnsdæla saga* is original and not a modification made by scribes later. A first version of *Landnámabók* probably existed in the early 12th century, based on various sources, both oral and written, from different parts of the country (Benediktsson 1968; Rafnsson 2001). In the early 13th century the work was subjected to considerable changes, turning its format into a story (Rafnsson 2001). It is hard to say at what stage *Vatnsdæla saga* became a source in the making of *Landnámabók*, although it was no later than the 13th century.

Landnámabók has been preserved in five versions, three of which date back to the Middle Ages.⁶³ One is preserved in the *Hauksbók* manuscript (AM 371 4°),⁶⁴ and was written by Haukr Erlendsson himself between 1302 and 1310, most probably before *Eiríks saga rauða* was written (S. Karlsson 1964). Some of the manuscript's pages have not been preserved, and unfortunately the page on which this excerpt was written has been lost. However, a copy of *Hauksbók* made in the 17th century (AM 105 fol) shows the term being used.

⁶¹ According to Karlsson (1964), a more accurate date may be the years between 1306 and 1308.

⁶² 'Finnar kómu aptr ok hófðu fundit hlutinn ok nát eigi; vísuðu þeir Ingimundi til í dal einum milli holta tveggja ok sögðu Ingimundi allt landsleg, hve háttat var þar er hann skyldi byggja.'

⁶³ These are the two versions found in the *Hauksbók* manuscript and the *Sturlubók* manuscript (see further discussion in the text). The third version is *Melabók*, of which only two pages have been preserved. Unfortunately, the settlement of Ingimundr gamli is not listed on those two pages.

⁶⁴ The *Hauksbók* manuscript is divided into three sections, as at some time in history the book was taken apart. The three sections are: AM 371 4° (including *Landnámabók*), AM 544 4° (including *Eiríks saga rauða*), and AM 675 4°

Haukr Erlendsson declares in his version of *Landnámabók* that he relied on two older versions: one that has since perished, and another that was written by Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284), preserved in a 17th century copy (AM 107 fol), which confirms the use of the term *landsleg*. All copies of the different versions of *Landnámabók* support the presumption that *landsleg* was in the original text.

The relation between the above-mentioned manuscripts is also noteworthy. After first appearing in *Vatnsdæla saga*, the concept then appeared in the *Landnámabók* of Sturla Þórðarson. Haukr Erlendsson copied it from Sturla's text in his version of *Landnámabók*, and used it later to paraphrase the text in his version of *Eiríks saga rauða*. The last version, however, remains the only one that can be verified. It may reasonably be argued that the term *landsleg* emerged in Iceland at some time during the Commonwealth period.

The relations (and non-relations) between *landslag* and *landscape*

The concept of *landsleg*, as it appears in the sagas, describes a human-land relationship that is grounded in surface features of the land. The visual perception of such morphological features is often associated with an aesthetic appreciation. This medieval conception corresponds to the lexical definition of *landslag* in the modern language. Today, the Icelandic *landslag* and the English *landscape* are treated as interchangeable concepts. However, the terms do not share the same history, but originated at different times and in different societies.

The oldest examples of the Icelandic landscape concept date back to when Icelanders still formed a young nation, but had already differentiated themselves from other people around the North Atlantic. Although the settlement in a pristine land can be expected to have produced human-land relations different from those that prevailed in the long-inhabited regions of Europe (Hastrup 1985), it is nonetheless highly unlikely that Icelanders alone possessed the faculty of appreciating land aesthetically.

The fact that the English *landscape* and the Icelandic *landslag* have come to signify much the same thing is intriguing. The current meaning of the English concept has been explained by way of art history and social theory (Cosgrove 1984; Olwig 2002). Its emergence and development in meaning is tightly interwoven with social, economic, and political changes in Europe from the Middle Ages until the 19th century, a history that Icelandic society only shares to a limited extent. There appear to be no societal connotations embedded in the concept *landsleg* that are similar to the ones described in Cosgrove's and Olwig's accounts of landscape. Moreover, at the heart of the English concept lies landscape painting, which dates back only to the turn of the 20th century in Iceland. As this analysis covers only a limited phase in the history of the Icelandic landscape concept, further examination is needed. Nevertheless, it shows that the aesthetic connotations embedded in the Icelandic landscape concept (i.e. experiencing the natural land aesthetically) emerged much earlier than in the English one. Cosgrove's and Olwig's accounts do not explain why Icelanders perceived and described natural land as beautiful in the early 14th century, and referred to it as *landsleg*. While I do not question their theses,

the results of my analysis indicate that landscape, regarded as natural inland scenery, was an object of aesthetic experience long before the artistic works of the Renaissance and Romanticism.

However, the meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept is of most significance for Icelanders themselves. For example, it is important for researchers and environmental planners in Iceland to realise that connotations embedded in the English concept are not necessarily relevant in Icelandic circumstances, and vice versa. The lack of attention to the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept has considerably affected planning practices in Iceland, notably in the field of conservation planning (Waage & Benediktsson 2010). The present study may therefore contribute to more successful implementation of the concept in environmental planning and landscape management.

Concluding remarks

This exploration of the Icelandic landscape concept does not support a societal description of the emergence of Icelandic landscape politics as might have been expected in the Northern European context. The Icelandic landscape concept is not descriptive of such processes and realities. Nonetheless, the relation between *landskapr* and *landsleg* is worthy of further examination, both within the Icelandic context and in comparison between Scandinavia and Iceland. In exploring *landslag* and *landsleg*, I have pointed out that the landscape concept within the cultural domain defined by the Germanic languages is not solely expressed by the terms landscape, *Landschaft*, *landskab* or other cognates. This article is thus intended to broaden the debate.

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List of manuscripts

AM 105 fol, AM 107 fol, AM 132 fol, AM 134 4°, AM 138 fol, AM 158 fol, AM 163 a fol, AM 334 fol, AM 371 4°, AM 471 4°, AM 544 4°, AM 557 4°, AM 559 4°, AM 561 4°, AM 675 4°, GKS 1005 fol, GKS 1157 fol, JS 28 fol. For detailed information see *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* (1989).

III Landscape as conversation⁶⁵

Introduction

The earth in all of its natural glory is an independent reality into which we are born and with which we engage in a complex relationship.

(Skúlason 2005, 27).

In examining the relationship between humans and nature, “landscape” has been a key concept for numerous scholars and has prompted a variety of theorisations. The concept however does not belong to any single discipline, nor to academia for that matter, for landscape is a culturally embedded concept, used by ordinary people in their everyday life. As culturally embedded, the conceptualisation of landscape can vary between linguistic communities (see Coeterier 1996; Gehring & Kohsaka 2007; Shaw & Oldfield 2007). Various disciplines may also define landscape in different ways, whether within linguistic communities or across them. Landscape in this sense amounts to theory; theory however, while offering an explanation of the world we live in, inevitably connotes a reduction of the world, purposefully constructed. Furthermore, a demarcation between disciplines does not guarantee a univocal conceptualisation of landscape. In geography alone different conceptualisations of landscape have been produced that for example depict landscape either as objective reality (e.g. Sauer 1996 [1925]), perceptual reality (e.g. Granö 1997 [1929]), political arena (e.g. Mitchell 1996), culturally defined territory (e.g. Olwig 2002), or a social construction (e.g. Cosgrove 1984), to mention only a few. Indeed there is a wide variety.

The aim of this paper is to delve into some ontological aspects of the Icelandic landscape concept. For this purpose landscape is theorised as a relational space, constituted by humans and nature, and brought to existence by way of human perception. Lately the idea of “conversation with landscape” has emerged as a way of portraying human relations to the world, both in landscape architecture (see Spirn 1998), and art (see Solnit 2003). Conversation in these terms represents communication between people and landscape, and emphasises somewhat the need to learn, listen to, and respond to the “language of landscape”. Arguably however, conversing “with” landscape may suggest landscape to be an independent reality apart from humans. The idea of conversation therefore seems not to facilitate an ontological examination of landscape as a concept. Furthermore, the way landscape is theorised here – as a relation between humans and nature – a conversation

⁶⁵ This paper has previously been published as a book chapter. Please consult the original publication for citation:

Waage, E. R. H. (2010). Landscape as conversation. In K. Benediktsson & K. A. Lund (Eds.), *Conversations With Landscape* (pp. 45–58). Farnham: Ashgate.

“with” landscape may be regarded as a contradiction in terms. Still, the idea of “conversation” with relevance to “landscape” is a challenging thought, which may shed a new and different light on the human-nature relation that is inherent in the landscape concept.

Generally, the word conversation refers to talk between two or more people who express and share their thoughts, feelings and ideas; ask and answer questions; and/or exchange information. For obvious reasons the term can hardly be adopted literally to describe a human-nature relationship, for nature is not a being as such in possession of mind and body that unmistakably are required for such utterly human interaction. Metaphorically however, it offers some delightful and democratic ways for contemplation of the human-nature relationship: it is possible to picture conversation as a performative relation (cf. Thrift and Dewsbury 2000) between two participants; a relation that exists only by means of the two, and only as long as they are both committed to forming the relation. The conversation does thus not exist materially but relationally, and it ceases to exist with the absence of one of the participants. However, the actual conversation can be recorded and replayed, or transcribed, and thus a representation of the conversation is feasible. Additionally, the conversation may be considered as a creative process, as the interchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas, brought to the conversation by the two participants, can generate a new perspective; a new meaning of the topic under discussion. In these terms then, landscape can be conceived of “as” a conversation, rather than an independent reality that is conversed “with”. This perspective implies that whoever speaks of landscape is essentially a constituent of the topic. This would include the author of this chapter. Let me therefore start at the beginning.

I am Icelandic; I was born and raised in downtown Reykjavík. In my childhood I used to travel with my family around Iceland during the summertime, until the age of eight that is. From then on till I was thirteen I spent the summers on a farm in the countryside where I participated in the everyday life of the family who lived there. My mother tongue is Icelandic and that was the only language I knew until the age of ten. I am not sure when I first learned the word *landslag*, which is the Icelandic word for “landscape”. But I am convinced it must have been early in my childhood, as I have no recollections at all of learning the word. In fact it feels as if it has always been a part of my vocabulary, clear and perspicuous. And I do remember myself as a child admiring the *landslag* of Hjaltadalur⁶⁶, thinking that surely there was no other place in the world where the shape of the mountains had reached such perfection and beauty. Thus, for as long as I remember I have used the word *landslag* as an expression to describe some of my experiences of the world. And in this regard I believe I am no exception; in retrospect I can honestly say that never did the use of the word raise any questions of what was being referred to. Only as a PhD student did I first problematise the meaning of *landslag* as a concept.

The beginning of my problematisation started with my reading of those authors who have been most influential within geography. Although inspired by their texts and eager to make use of them in my research, none of the various landscape ideas, presented by these authors, resonated with my understanding of *landslag*, (painfully undefined though at the time). To begin with I was unaware of this inconsistency, although it proved to be a

⁶⁶ Hjaltadalur is a valley in the region of Skagafjörður in North-Iceland.

hindrance at first in my research, of which I was very much aware. My project focused on nature conservation in Iceland with reference to landscape, and this entailed interviews conducted in Icelandic with Icelanders. It took me some time to realise that probably I was taking for granted that the two words: “landscape” and “*landslag*”, could be used interchangeably, failing to note the conceptual differences that may be present in the idea of landscape between linguistic communities, as mentioned above. The interviews yielded some interesting results however, which has prompted me to explore the Icelandic landscape concept in more detail.

The analysis here presented is partly based on two case studies that deal with the conceptualisation of landscape in Icelandic context. The first of these is the case study mentioned above, the focal point of which was the introduction of landscape as a premise for selecting conservation areas in Iceland’s first Nature Conservation Strategy. This study revealed a very clear connection between landscape and experience of beauty (see Waage and Benediktsson 2010). The second is a case study on the Icelandic landscape concept as it appears in the “Sagas of Icelanders”, in which the aesthetic component of the concept was traced back to the fourteenth century and discussed in comparison with the English landscape concept. From these studies I argue that *landslag* is the name given to an aesthetic relation between humans and the inanimate natural world.

Much of literature on the landscape concept, within geography and related fields, mentions its ambiguity and complexity: dissimilar discourses are provoked by its application to the extent that sometimes it may be more relevant to speak of different landscape concepts (Jones 2006). As mentioned in the beginning of this introduction the diverse conceptualisations of landscape may be divided into culturally embedded concepts on one hand, and theoretically defined concepts on the other. Perhaps it may be helpful to understand the diverse landscape concepts as different sets, each defined by its characteristics. But despite the variety, many of the sets intersect with each other to a greater or lesser extent where the same characteristics are shared; some may even be regarded as subsets within others. What seem to be two connecting themes are that landscape connotes: a) relation between humans and nature, and b) a holistic point of view. For example, landscape is frequently described as the total sum of characteristics, both natural and cultural, in a given area. What differs is the nature of the relation, how and where it is manifested, and what is included in the whole. For instance, according to some conceptualisations, landscape is perceptual, thus turning the onlooker into an inseparable part of the landscape. Some even go so far as to argue that landscape is first and foremost a construct of the mind. Then there are other conceptualisations that represent landscape as a place where human-nature interactions in the past can be witnessed, thus ignoring the onlooker of the landscape in the present. Landscape is thus not homogeneous as a concept, but varies between cultures in more than one way, and this must be acknowledged and kept in mind when it comes to implementing the concept in concrete projects, such as planning and conservation. For despite the clarity of landscape theories and definitions that might be expected within any given discipline, landscape conservation does not occur in a cultural void: the culturally embedded meaning of landscape may necessarily co-constitute the scientific performance in landscape conservation, despite efforts being made to the contrary (Waage and Benediktsson 2010), and may therefore always be present, even when theoretical conceptualisations of landscape are being employed. The focus of this paper then is on the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept.

Landscape as a relational space in the world of perception

For the purpose of the argumentation I partly rely on some strands of actor-network theory (ANT), which Bruno Latour, one of its originators, has described as a “theory of the space or fluids circulating in a non-modern situation” (Latour 1999a: 22). The first strand to mention relates to the “non-modern” situation, which implies a rejection of dualism between nature and society. In regard to this, Latour (1993) has described how modernity saw a complete separation between the natural world and the social world, and how this separation paradoxically made possible the creation of “hybrids” of nature and culture that however fitted neither of the categories. Paradoxically, because conceiving of nature and society as two different ontological zones with no middle ground forbids us to conceive of hybrids, and yet it is the very separation that allows for their creation and proliferation. The separation thus both denies and permits at once the existence of hybrids. Acknowledging the hybrids is therefore to call modernity into question, because it undermines the very belief that nature and society are necessarily separated. In a non-modern world this dualism is therefore rejected. Nature and society still exist of course and are present in their common productions, but they are not separable.

The second strand of ANT that is of importance for my argumentation concerns the conception of networks, which correspond to the hybrids of nature and culture mentioned above. As the name suggests the network is one of the primary tenets of ANT. An important notion of the theory is that it sees the entities enrolled in the network both to be: social and natural, human and non-human, subjects and objects. As a result of interrelations within the network the entities take their form and acquire their attributes. It is thus in, by, and through the relations between these entities that they achieve their form; the relations between the entities are performative (Law 1999). The co-construction of heterogeneous entities, and their performative relations, suggests uncertainty and reversibility, for “when a phenomenon “definitely” exists that does not mean that it exists forever, or independently of all practice and discipline, but that it has been entrenched” in a network (Latour 1999b: 155–6).

Finally, the third strand from ANT that is significant for the context presented here concerns its spatial conception. The conventional conceptualisation describes space as three-dimensional, through which objects can be transported. ANT on the other hand proposes space to be relational, as emerging from within the hybrid networks. Its shape and form is thus determined by the networks. In other words: networks make space (Law 1999, Murdoch 2006).

Back to the topic of this paper then: One of the most common characteristics of the landscape concept is that it represents a relation between humans and nature. By means of ANT it is possible to conceive of this relation as a hybrid network of heterogeneous entities, which humans and nature certainly are. The relation between humans and nature is performative in the sense that it exists only by means of the two, and at the same time through their relation the two acquire the form they have within the network. And thus from within this hybrid network of humans and nature emerges a relational space; a space called landscape. Humans and nature can therefore not be separated in terms of landscape, but neither do they remain the same once they co-constitute the network. For example, a

mountain and a landscape is not one and the same thing, but when gazed at by a human, the mountain becomes part of a landscape. It can thus be argued that the mountain and the human co-constitute the landscape. Consequently there is no landscape without humans, as there is no landscape without nature. To sum this up: landscape can be conceived of as a relational space; a space that is determined by the performative relations of humans and nature in a hybrid network.

According to John Law (1999: 4), ANT “may be understood as a semiotics of materiality. It takes the semiotic insight, that of the relationality of entities, the notion that they are produced in relation, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials – and not simply those that are “linguistic”. Taking this step and applying the semiotic insight of the human-nature relationship to a network that is manifested in its materiality might therefore be useful to seek understanding of the emergence and progression of landscapes conceived of differently than done here. This paper however aims at examining the aesthetic relationship humans have with nature in terms of landscape, and is based on the assumption that beauty is neither inherent in the objects’ qualities nor in the mind of the subjects, but that it is integrated with their relation (see Brady 2003). I will therefore suffice with ANT’s semiotic insight, for the landscape under discussion is not to be found in the material world, but in the “world of perception”.

This last notion brings me to the final part of my argumentation, which is meant to deepen its relational aspect, drawing upon the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The world of perception is “the world which is revealed to us by our senses and in everyday life” (Merleau-Ponty 2004 [1948], 31) and yet this world is hidden to us beneath sediments of knowledge and social living. Critical of the Cartesian dualism, which entails a separation between mind and body, Merleau-Ponty called attention to how rationalism and scientific thought imposed on us the idea that we are deceived by our senses, that the real world lies behind our sensory illusions, and that it can only be revealed to us by our intellect. Opposing this, he argued that scientific explanations and theories constitute knowledge by approximation, and that scientific research is always determined by the observer and his perception of the world. Thus Merleau-Ponty highlighted and opposed to at the same time what rationalism had implied, although such reasoning never was explicated, that humans were first and foremost thinking subjects; disembodied and without spatial position. And so he argued on the contrary, that the observer can not be abstracted from a given situation: a pure intellect does not exist, for “rather than a mind and a body, man is a mind with a body, a being who can only get to the truth of things because its body is, as it were, embedded in those things” (Merleau-Ponty 2004 [1948]: 43, *italics original*). The space in which we humans are situated is only accessible to us through our sense organs, thus the body becomes essential for relating to the world, and consequently our perspective is always limited to our bodily position. As embodied subjects we inhabit the world together with other subjects, and things inanimated. What distinguishes us as subjects from things “in the world” (Merleau-Ponty 2002 [1945]) is that we are actively involved with other subjects and objects of the world, by means of our senses. Their qualities as we perceive them are human definitions, limited by our sense organs, and thus the things of the world are also combinations of mind and body (Merleau-Ponty 2004 [1948]). In the world of perception it is therefore impossible to separate things from their way of appearing; the subject and the world are inseparable. To explore the world of perception is to explore how

we relate to the things and subjects that surround us in the world. To do so we need to focus on the lived and immediate experience.

Let us now turn back to landscape again. While ANT enables a conception of landscape as a relational space that is determined by the performative relation of humans and nature in a hybrid network, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy offers a deeper understanding of the emergence of this relation. It explains how the human-nature relation is brought into existence by means of the human's sense organs, and how the space that is thus created is at the same time limited by the bodily position of humans in the world. Landscape thus connotes a delimited and relative perspective, for each and every human is bound up with its bodily position in the world. And yet it is universal for each and every human, in theory at least, has equal possibility of the same bodily position (cf. Kant's (2000 [1790]) idea on "subjectively universal validity"; see also Brady's (2003) idea of "intersubjective validity"). Landscape, in this line of reasoning, also connotes a lived experience of the world in the present; it is therefore transitory. And yet it is eternal as long as this kind of human-nature relation emerges in the world.

This last notion begs the question of what is the kind of this relation I have depicted so far, for not all relation humans have with nature by means of their sense organs, can be conceived of as this relational space called landscape. Evidently there is something about the nature of these relations that defines whether we call it landscape or not. And presumably this "something" cannot be reduced to a single theory, for this is where cultural differences enter the stage. In different societies there are different relations to nature that depend of course on nature as it were, but also on the culture; the environmental circumstances people cope with in their everyday life and their cultural values. Regarding the Icelandic landscape concept a reference to aesthetic appreciation has already been made which hints at the conclusion; this however needs to be discussed more clearly. In the next section I will introduce the Icelandic landscape concept and highlight some of its arguably important aspects. In the subsequent section I draw some conclusions in terms of the theoretical perspective presented above in order to provide an understanding of the human-nature relation that is inherent in *landslag* and its embedded meaning.

The Icelandic landscape concept

The lexical entry for *landslag* is "total appearance of an area of land, the form of nature in a particular place"⁶⁷ (Árnason 2007: *landslag*, my translation). What is noticeable first is the emphasis on its visual quality through "appearance", and morphological quality through "the form of nature". A lexical definition however only portrays part of the picture. How the word is being put to use can also help to illuminate its meaning. According to a dictionary of the use of Icelandic, *landslag* is most often accompanied by qualifying adjectives such as: "beautiful, scenic, impressive, magnificent, effective, spectacular, majestic, expressive, grand, tremendous, unimpressive, monotonous, bland, insignificant"⁶⁸

⁶⁷ 'Heildarútlit landsvæðis, form náttúru á tilteknum stað.'

⁶⁸ 'Fallegt, fagurt, tilkomumikið, mikilfenglegt, áhrifamikið, stórbrotið, tignarlegt, svipmikið, stórgert, hrikalegt, tilkomulítið, tilbreytingarlaust, sviplítið, lítilfjörlegt.'

(Jónsson 1994: *landslag*, my translation). *Landslag* is thus most often associated with an aesthetic expression or experience. An aesthetic quality may therefore arguably also be regarded as an integral element of the concept, just as its visual and morphological qualities.

A discourse analysis of interviews conducted with experts in nature conservation in Iceland provides a comparable outcome, which also contributes to a deeper understanding, but in their conceptualisation of landscape a tension of the same qualities emerged (see Waage and Benediktsson 2010). Physical qualities of land, i.e. different combinations of natural features, such as geological formations, vegetation, and hydrology, featured in the interviews when referring to landscape. At times these corresponded to a physical world from which humans were excluded. Many of the interviewees however, while recognising such reasoning, disagreed with it, as landscape in these terms merely involves objects that are already covered by the natural sciences. In their mind, landscape was something much more than that. Hence, visual qualities of land were prominent as well. Then the same physical qualities were involved, not their materiality however, but their interplay seen from an actual viewpoint. Their forms, outlines, textures, and colours were thus at the forefront. It may be argued that conceiving of landscape in these terms implies that landscape is brought into existence through the human gaze. The analysis furthermore revealed that aesthetic judgment was strongly embedded in the landscape concept, in fact it seemed that in the experts' mind landscape and the experience of beauty were so tightly connected that they could not be taken apart; landscape was thus repeatedly equated with beauty. At times these aesthetic judgments were explained by affects and emotions resulting from previous landscape experiences, but the interviewees identified as well aesthetic judgments that seemed neither to result from personal experience nor knowledge, but yet were general. This subjective character of the landscape concept had provoked deep contemplation among some of the interviewees: For one thing, they recognised that the Icelandic landscape concept could not be treated by objective methods alone, and for another, they were puzzled by the fact that a non-cognitive aesthetic judgement, that supposedly is subjective could yet be general (for further discussion see Waage and Benediktsson 2010). The analysis thus demonstrated that among the interviewees, the morphological, visual, and aesthetic qualities of land, despite being conflicting, arguably were all interwoven in their conceptualisation of *landslag*.

The visual and aesthetic qualities of *landslag* bring to mind its English counterpart "landscape", which shares the same characteristics. These mutual qualities however do not necessarily indicate a shared meaning, as a brief historical comparison of the two concepts will elucidate. Indeed they have different connotations.

Whatever the meaning "landscape" may have in all the different landscape theories that have been developed within the English language, the concept most commonly refers to scenery; either an area of land seen from a particular point of view and often considered in terms of its aesthetic appeal, or a pictorial representation thereof – a landscape painting (Wylie 2007). This scenic notion of landscape inherent in its popular use has been of interest to some geographers in the last thirty years. Denis Cosgrove (1984, 1985) has accounted for this understanding of landscape, tracing it back to Florence in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, as a dimension of European elite consciousness. At this particular time and place in history emerged an artistic technique for representing the world

in a supposedly realistic and truthful way, namely the linear perspective. In Britain, this artistic perspective of landscape was somewhat superimposed on natural vista, not least by the educated classes, and nature was in that way turned into a scenic resource (cf. Olwig 2002). The emergence of landscape as a term, or an idea, is thus associated with arts. Cosgrove's argument is that the landscape idea in European context, rather than representing the visible land as such, represents a "way of seeing", a socially constructed behaviour that is informed by arts. Cosgrove's intention was to clarify certain assumptions that he believed to be embedded in the landscape concept, which had to do with the relationship between humans and their environment. His claim was that representing a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface, directs the external world towards the onlooker, which is situated outside that space. It thus gives the eye a mastery over space. Landscape becomes appropriated by a distanced observer and offers the illusion of order and control, where evidence of conflicts between social classes is suppressed. Landscape as a "way of seeing" thus arguably increases the gap between humans and nature.

Turning back to the Icelandic landscape concept, the word *landslag* is deeply rooted in the Icelandic language. The archaic spelling *landsleg* is found in a few parchment manuscripts of Icelandic literature, some of which were written in the early fourteenth century. Apparently the meaning of the word has not changed discernibly since medieval times, although its lexical entries have become more specific. In a dictionary of Old Icelandic, *landslag* has been defined as: "the nature, "lie" of a country" (Cleasby and Vigfusson 1975 [1874]: *landslag*); a rather wide definition as "lie" indicates features or characteristics of an area. Arguably it refers to spatial arrangement and thus connotes a holistic point of view. A discourse analysis focusing on *landslag* as a concept in the "Sagas of Icelanders" has helped to illuminate its conception in medieval times and revealed that the visual, morphological and aesthetic were already intertwined and embedded in the concept at the turn of the fourteenth century.

The "Saga of Erik the Red" holds a good example of the interrelations between these qualities. The saga narrates the settlement of Erik the Red in Greenland and the discovery of new lands in the west. It thus describes Norse settlement on the east coast of North America at some time around the year 1000. Two parchment manuscripts of this particular saga have been preserved, one that dates back to the first decade of the fourteenth century, and another that dates back to the early fifteenth century. Both are copies of an older manuscript that has perished (Jansson 1945). What makes this example intriguing is that the two manuscripts differ strikingly in their wording. While the fifteenth century manuscript is believed to be closer to the original text, the fourteenth century manuscript contains text that presumably is a paraphrase of the original. Thus coincidentally a comparison of the two manuscripts helps to elucidate the conceptual meaning of some words that are used in the text. At one point in the narrative the fifteenth century manuscript says (in my literal translation):

They headed up the fjord and called it Straumsfjördr and carried the cargo from the ships and prepared for staying. They had with them all kinds of livestock and searched for resources from the land. *There were mountains and beautiful*

to look around. They paid no attention to things other than exploring the land. There the grass grew tall⁶⁹ (Eiríks saga rauða 1985, 424-425, italics added).

The fourteenth century manuscript on the other hand says:

They called it Straumfjörðr. They carried the cargo from their ships and prepared for staying. They had with them all kinds of livestock. *There was beautiful landsleg*. They paid attention to nothing other than exploring the land⁷⁰ (Eiríks saga rauða 1935, 224, italics added).

If only the fourteenth century manuscript had been preserved, we would not know what was being referred to explicitly with the word *landsleg*. We could assume that it referred to some natural features in this particular fjord and that they provoked an aesthetic response. The fifteenth century manuscript thus illuminates the meaning of the word. Comparing these two sentences it becomes obvious that shortly after 1300 the scribe of the Saga of Erik the Red regarded the word *landsleg* to be a concise explanation when referring to mountains that were beautiful to look at.

From the above it becomes evident that there are cultural differences between the two concepts. They have different origins, so while the popular usage of the English “landscape” is associated with the emergence of artistic techniques in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, and was later superimposed on natural scenery, the Icelandic *landsleg* can, in its current meaning with reference to natural features, be traced back to the early fourteenth century. It is also relevant for the discussion that landscape painting was unknown in Iceland until the turn of the twentieth century. The cultural differences of the two concepts may also be explained by differences in social order. While the English concept “landscape” emerged amongst members of the European elite, who lived in a developed society on land that had been populated for centuries, the Icelandic *landslag* appears in a society of subsistence farmers and seafarers, living in a country that had only recently been settled.

They way Cosgrove describes the English landscape concept, it is marked by modernity and the gap that was created between humans and nature by the Cartesian move. The Icelandic landscape concept on the other hand can be traced in its current meaning back to pre-modern times, when humans and nature were not yet performed as opposites. It is too early to state whether *landslag* can indeed be regarded as a pre-modern concept that has survived modernity and thus connotes a human-nature relation that supposedly is not embedded in its English counterpart. Landscape research in Iceland is in its infancy and hopefully arguments for such reasoning may be developed later. But from the historical comparison above, it may yet be argued that the aesthetic quality of *landslag* on the one hand, and “landscape” on the other have different origins.

⁶⁹ ‘Þeir heldu inn með firðinum ok kǫlluðu hann Straumfjörð ok báru farminn af skipunum ok bjuggusk þar um. Þeir hǫfðu með sér alls konar fænað ok leituðu sér þar landsnytja. Fjöll voru þar, ok fagrt var þar um at litask. Þeir gáðu einskis nema at kanna landit. Þar váru grǫs mikil.’

⁷⁰ ‘Þeir kǫlluðu þar Straumfjörð. Þeir báru þar farm af skipum sínum ok bjuggusk þar um. Þeir hǫfðu með sér alls konar fænað. Þar var fagrt landsleg; þeir gáðu einskis, útan at kanna landit.’

The culturally embedded meaning of *landslag*

I have argued here that landscape can be conceived of as a relational space that is determined by the performative relation of humans and nature in a hybrid network. A space that is brought to existence by means of the human sense organs and is consequently always bound up with the bodily position of humans in the world. This entails that landscape is delimited, relative and transitory, and can yet be universal and eternal. However, not all relations humans have with nature are referred to as landscape, what defines a relation as landscape is culturally dependent. Having examined some essential features of the Icelandic landscape concept, it is time to derive a conclusion regarding the character of this human-nature relation and the meaning that is embedded in the concept.

Whether looking up entries in dictionaries, analysing the discourse of experts in nature conservation, or examining the old texts of the Sagas of Icelanders, it becomes obvious that *landslag* is essentially visual. Arguably therefore, of all the human sense organs, it is the eye that is most significant for giving birth to this relational space. This is not to say that other sensory perceptions do not enhance the *landslag* experience, e.g. hearing the noise of a tumbling waterfall; or the sound of silence in the highlands; smelling freshly mown grass; and so on. Although these perceptions may be integral to our experiences they are not necessary constituents for defining *landslag*. Regarding nature's role in this hybrid relation, its morphological quality is clearly of great significance; indeed mountains are most often central to *landslag*. Other visual qualities of nature, such as texture or colour, do enhance the *landslag* experience; needless to say all forms come in different colours and textures, which may produce different sentiments, and affects, that are integral to our experience. And yet, despite being important for describing a particular *landslag*, colours and textures are not necessary constituents for defining the concept.

The weight of mountains in the conceptualisation of *landslag* may be explained by the fact that Iceland is a volcanic island, and natural scenery with no mountain is indeed hard to come by. It is not unlikely that this natural setting may have influenced the being-in-the-world of Icelanders. This emotional and symbolic expression of *Salka Valka*, one of Halldór Laxness' great protagonists, may be regarded as a case in point: "The shadow of some mountain always falls on our village" (Laxness 1932, 149). The quasi-omnipresence of mountains in Iceland also explains why in the Icelandic language it is possible to state that in some places "there is no *landslag*". Such a statement would refer to areas where land is relatively flat, e.g. Denmark⁷¹. An Icelandic might also claim to "see no *landslag*" where the view is blocked, for example by forest, as in Finland. From the above, one might jump to the conclusion that whenever an Icelandic looks at a mountain s/he would call it *landslag*. This however is not the case, even though s/he would probably find it difficult to argue on the contrary when confronted with such a statement. It is when this relation, between the human (through his/her sight) and nature (its morphological quality in particular), produces an aesthetic response that is felt within the human, that s/he refers to it as *landslag*. And just as the visual and morphological qualities are necessary constituents for defining this experience as *landslag*, so is the aesthetic aspect. I therefore argue that

⁷¹ Once, while staying in Denmark the artist Pétur Gautur was asked why he painted still lifes. His reply was: "Well, I can't paint landscape for there is no landscape here in Denmark. Therefore I have to make use of things that are near to me" (Svavarsson 1997).

landslag is the name given to an aesthetic relation between humans and the inanimate nature; a relation that is brought to existence by way of ocular perception of the world, and that centres upon nature's morphological quality.

Now, how can the metaphor of landscape as conversation, as delineated in the introduction of this chapter, enhance our understanding of this relational space called landscape? Well, to begin with it underpins what ANT already suggests, which is the collective contribution of humans and nature to landscape. The advantage of conversation over ANT in this regard, however, is the sense of democracy embedded in the concept of conversation; a sense of respect that so very much is needed in our conduct towards nature. The conversation metaphor also emphasises that landscape is always in the making; landscape is an ongoing conversation between humans and nature, but not a conversation that was had at some time in the past and has come to an end. That would rather refer to a representation of landscape. The creative factor of the conversation metaphor suggests that a new meaning is created through the interaction of humans and nature. In the case of *landslag* it is its aesthetic quality, but the conversational metaphor furthermore emphasises the impermanence and fragility of this aesthetic quality (and hence of *landslag*). It therefore implies that *landslag* is something that is very precious. In short, what the conversation metaphor brings to landscape is a moral aspect of this human-nature relation.

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IV Lay landscapes: Exploring the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept using Husserlian phenomenology

Introduction

Landscape has figured prominently within the conservation discourse in Iceland since the beginning of the 21st century. The increased reliance on systematic methods and expertise for selecting conservation areas has confirmed the necessity to define the Icelandic landscape concept *landslag* in legislation, in order to successfully implement the concept in conservation projects (Waage & Benediktsson, 2010). The concept *landslag*, however, is not new to Icelanders; it is part of their everyday language and has been so for a very long time. It appears already in manuscripts written in the 14th century (Waage, 2012). *Landslag* is thus unquestionably deep-rooted in Icelandic culture. Yet, when it comes to defining *landslag* in legislation⁷², its culturally embedded meaning has not been used as a conceptual foundation. Instead, advocates of landscape protection in Iceland have leaned towards the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and adopted its definition of *landscape* (Council of Europe, 2000a).

The adoption of a definition of landscape from an international convention is in line with the emphasis put on systematization and efficiency which has accompanied the reconfiguration of conservation. It may also be explained by the fact that only recently has the concept of *landslag* become of interest in scholarly research (see Waage, 2010, 2012; Waage & Benediktsson, 2010; Þórhallsdóttir, Árnason, Bárðarson, & Pálsdóttir, 2010). Even so, the adoption of the ELC definition of landscape may arguably also be seen to reveal apathy towards the culturally embedded meaning of the Icelandic landscape concept, and its value for conservation and culture at large.

The objective of this article is twofold. First, it presents a study whose aim was to explore how ‘lay’ people in Iceland perceive and describe their experiences of what they define as *landslag*. Accordingly, the study is meant to contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept, which may be of value not only in an Icelandic context, but also to those landscape scholars more broadly who are interested in different conceptions of landscape. Second, the study is based on Husserlian phenomenology, which to my knowledge has not been employed previously for exploring the meaning of landscape. Hence, this article is

⁷² The first definition of the *landslag* concept in Icelandic legislation appeared in 2010 in a revised planning act; Skipulagslög, no. 123/2010. A second version was produced in 2013 with a new Act on Nature Conservation no. 60/2013. Both definitions are based upon the definition of ‘landscape’ provided in the European Landscape Convention.

meant to contribute to a much wider discussion about landscape phenomenology among cultural geographers. Additionally, the case of *landslag* and its legal definition raises questions regarding definitions of concepts, translations of concepts, meanings, and definitions, and the value and relevance of superimposing an international definition of landscape upon parallel concepts that are culturally embedded.

The article first discusses the phenomenological perspective by introducing one line of its articulation in landscape studies within cultural geography, and subsequently describes how phenomenology provides a foundation for this particular study. The results from the study are then introduced. The article concludes with a discussion about the value of the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* for conservation and culture more generally.

Landscape, phenomenology and cultural geography

The coupling of landscape and phenomenology was noticeably revealed in the early 1990s with publications within anthropology (Ingold, 1993b), biology (Von Maltzahn, 1994), and archaeology (Tilley, 1994). In spite of dissimilar background, these works were cognitively related as their authors sought to rethink the human-nature relationship in terms of landscape, while drawing back from dualist ontology. In geography, similar developments were already underway, as described by Wylie (2007). The contribution of phenomenology to landscape studies was therefore welcomed within the discipline.

Phenomenology, however, was not new to geographers at the time, for interest in it may be traced back to the early 1970s (Jackson, 1981). But no doubt it was Tim Ingold who significantly turned the attention of geographers to landscape phenomenology. Of particular importance in this regard was his article *The Temporality of the Landscape*. Ingold here elaborated his ‘dwelling perspective’, where he conceptualized landscape as a living process, rather than an object: “The landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them” (Ingold, 1993b, 156). He continued to argue that, through the process of dwelling over time, forms of the landscape are constituted. Accordingly, landscape becomes the embodiment of an array of related activities, both human and non-human, and is therefore constantly in the making.

Ingold’s work turned out to strengthen the ongoing adoption of relational ontology among cultural geographers doing landscape studies in the UK. For example, Cloke and Jones combined the notion of dwelling with actor-network theory as a means to account for the creative agency of non-human actants within landscape (Cloke & Jones, 2001). But whilst Ingold’s work thus contributed to the development of geographical thought that was already in progress, it also prompted geographers to investigate the phenomenological literature more thoroughly, particularly the works of two philosophers who had influenced Ingold’s theorising: Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

A prominent exponent of such an approach is John Wylie (but see also Harrison, 2007; Olafsdottir, 2007; Rose, 2006). By exploring and advocating the work of Merleau-Ponty, within the framework of non-representational theory, Wylie offers a renewed

understanding of landscape and the gazing subject, as opposed to defining landscape as ‘a way of seeing’ the world. Following up autoethnographic descriptions Wylie (2002, 2005) comes to articulate an understanding of landscape as “the actualisation of a certain relationship between ‘self’ and ‘world’”; (Wylie, 2006, 521) a relationship that is established through the emergence of the gaze upon a ‘plane of immanence’:

Landscape names the materialities and sensibilities with and according to which we see. Neither an empirical content nor a cultural construct, landscape belongs to neither object nor subject; in fact, it adheres within processes that subtend and afford these terms. (Wylie, 2006, 520)

Wylie’s phenomenological approach to landscape develops into an ontological examination where landscape is understood as processual in a world of becoming, allowing for the formation of subject and object. This investigation into ontological aspects of landscape is continued as he explores how motifs of absence and distance are constitutive of landscape (Wylie, 2009). In his most recent work, Wylie uses the writings of Tim Robinson to argue that a displacement of dwelling is actually a precondition of landscape, thus elaborating further on Ingold’s ideas on landscape and dwelling, and the tension between land and life (Wylie, 2012).

Wylie’s work offers a compelling insight into the constitution of landscape. But rather than attempting to continue with the ontological examination of landscape, for reasons addressed shortly, this paper adopts a different yet parallel position. It describes some of the essential features constituting the meaning of *landslag*, attributed to relations between self and world. Furthermore, the phenomenological approach presented in this paper differs from those outlined above, as it draws mainly upon the work of Edmund Husserl.

Landscape as an expression

In his *Logical Investigations*, Husserl emphasises the importance of language as the principal instrument of thought, and notes that all theoretical research terminate in statements of verbal expressions (Husserl, 1970). In the first *Investigation* he examines the relationship between expression and meaning, and presents a philosophical analysis of meaning for this purpose. He observes that although meanings can exist in themselves as possible meanings, unrecognised and unrealized, they become real in human mental life through expressions. An expression in this context is a meaningful sign, in which two things are commonly distinguished: the physical appearance of the expression (whether it be an articulated sound-complex, or a written sign on paper) and the meaning attached to it. But Husserl argues that this distinction is inadequate, for the meaning of an expression is always a meaning of something, this something being a referenced object. He furthermore stresses that the meaning of the expression and the objective correlate do not coincide; when making a statement about an object, one does not express the object as such, but the meaning one attaches to the object. Thus, the relation between expression and object is constituted in meaning.

The need for this distinction between meaning and object becomes clear when comparing different expressions, which have different meaning but refer to the same object. For this purpose, Husserl brings up the example of ‘the equilateral triangle’ and ‘the equiangular

triangle'. The meaning expressed is clearly different in the two cases while they both refer to the same object. Conversely, different expressions can have the same meaning while referencing different objects. Then they can also agree in both respects, as in the case of synonymous expressions. Different languages, for instance, use different words to mean and name the same thing, e.g. 'two', 'zwei', 'due'. An expression then can also refer to a series of objects, its meaning then being a concept, as noted by Husserl in his sixth Investigation.

What can be said about 'landscape' in this context? Husserl's analysis reminds us that 'landscape' is first and foremost a linguistic expression, and as such inherently cultural. Hence, any discussion about landscape, however abstract it may be, necessarily includes the meaning applied to the concept within the given culture, and a referenced object. For the purpose of this study, then, it may be more relevant to ask: What can be said about 'landscape' and '*landslag*', in the light of Husserl's analysis? The two words are used interchangeably in translation, but if we are to consider the English word landscape and the Icelandic *landslag* as two different expressions, it calls for an explication of whether they share the same meaning and refer to the same object. Although lexical entries point to a similar meaning in the modern version of the respective languages, a comparison between the concepts reveals their different origins and indicates their objective correlates to have been different, at least to begin with (Waage, 2012). The point here made is that explorations of 'landscape' do not by default elucidate matters of '*landslag*', as both *landslag* and landscape are inescapably bound by their linguistic-cultural background.

Husserl's analysis of meaning has therefore epistemologically informed the present study in two ways. First, an emphasis is put on the importance of distinguishing between expression, meaning and object, when exploring the meaning of *landslag* as a concept. Second, with reference to the above-mentioned distinction and noting the interconnection between language and culture, it is argued that *landslag* has to be approached and studied on its own merits, rather than being conditioned by studies of 'landscape'.

But Husserl's influence on the study is more extensive. In his second major work, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, his phenomenology of meaning developed towards transcendentalism (Husserl, 1983). Here he presented his well-known *phenomenological reduction* and the *epoché* (ἐποχή); methods that were intended to make accessible the phenomenological region, and hence to describe the phenomenon as it appears to the pure consciousness. In the next section I will briefly describe and discuss these methods and explain their use in the present study of *landslag*.

Logic and methods for exploring the meaning of landslag

Husserlian phenomenology is concerned with phenomena; things as they appear to the consciousness of the one who experiences them. The word phenomenon thus refers to the "essential correlation between *appearance and that which appears*" (Husserl, 1964, 24). Phenomenology, therefore, centres on human experience and focuses both on human consciousness and its objects, whether they exist materially or not. Phenomenology is thus different from both realism and idealism; it does not deny the materiality of the world, or see the world as depending on human perception of it. But, as Husserl points out, our access to the world is limited by our experience of it (Husserl, 1983). Hence, all our

knowledge of the world is inevitably gained from our experience of the world. The aim of phenomenology is to describe the phenomena and to account for their structure and essences (for a concise selection of Husserl's texts on transcendental phenomenology, see Husserl, 1999).

An important premise in Husserl's theory, then, is that phenomena have an essence, which is the focal point of their description. But the undertaking has a drawback, for the essence of the phenomena is obscured by our mundane understanding of things; an understanding which constitutes our taken-for-granted world-belief, referred to by Husserl as the *natural attitude*. For a phenomenological description to take place, one must therefore disconnect from this world-belief, in order to reach the pure consciousness and hence the phenomenological region. That is where 'things in themselves' can be described, as they appear to the pure consciousness; prior to any knowledge and to their constitution performed by the mental processes; hence the transcendental consciousness. The method used for this sort of an analysis Husserl spoke of as *phenomenological reduction*, and when directed at the consciousness alone, he would refer to it as *transcendental reduction* (Husserl, 1983).

The *epoché* serves as a prelude to the reduction and is essential for its accomplishment. With the *epoché* we *parenthesize* (or *bracket*) our general positing pertaining to the natural attitude, as Husserl would put it (Husserl, 1983). This means that all our knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation is temporarily put aside and systematically excluded during the analysis. The *epoché* starts with an attempt to doubt, but as Husserl points out it is not a form of scepticism, doubting the factual existence of the world. And unlike the Cartesian doubt, the *epoché* on its own does not alter our conviction of the world. Neither is the *epoché* to be mistaken for the requirements made by positivism, such as excluding all prejudices for gaining objectivity in research. What it does is to demand an approach to the phenomenon for what it is, and on no other grounds. This means that all preconceived ideas and theories, whether scientific or not, are without validity when parenthesized; they are neither tested nor contested, and do not provide a foundation for the investigation. By practicing the *epoché* we thus systematically exclude our world-belief, which we commonly take for granted.

Criticism of phenomenological reduction

Husserl's phenomenology marks the beginning of the phenomenological movement, and his theory stands as a benchmark for successive phenomenologists to engage with and measure themselves against. His turn to transcendentalism was not met with general acceptance by his successors, but became widely resisted, and hence also the method of phenomenological reduction. As for the two philosophers mentioned above, Heidegger perused Husserl's texts (Moran, 2000), but he neither mentioned the reduction, the *epoché*, nor the natural attitude, in his *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962). Still the book was dedicated to Husserl, and Heidegger remained faithful to Husserl's project as he attempted in his own original way to get back to the 'things in themselves'. But instead of human consciousness, his inquiry was directed at human existence. And although his book may have aimed at "an a priori transcendental phenomenological description of human existence" (Moran, 2000, 222), it emphasised the environmental context of being with reference to culture, temporality, and history: Human being is 'Being-in-the-world', a

theme later adopted by Ingold in his formulation of the dwelling perspective, mentioned above.

Merleau-Ponty also investigated Husserl's texts, but contrary to Heidegger he embraced different threads of his theory and methods. His focus however was primarily on describing the experience of embodied human existence and perception. Merleau-Ponty discusses the phenomenological reduction in the preface of his *Phenomenology of Perception* and agrees with Husserl on the importance of suspending the natural attitude. Being an existentialist, however, Merleau-Ponty sees the reduction not as leading to transcendental consciousness, for, as he noted, "man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xii). That is why he also remarked that "the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xv). Rather, Merleau-Ponty saw the reduction as returning to a pre-reflective world and hence, the aim of phenomenology to describe a pre-conceptual experience (Moran, 2000). Through this interpretation, Merleau-Ponty remained sympathetic to the reduction. During the last years of his life however, he renounced the idea altogether as a basis for philosophical certainty (see Kwant, 1967). "The being of the essence is not primary" Merleau-Ponty (1968, 109) notes, for human experience precedes the essences which are the topic of the Husserlian inquiry. Therefore the essences identified with the reduction are always contextual. For a philosophical inquiry, therefore, the reduction has to be abandoned.

The phenomenological reduction has thus primarily been opposed on account of the transcendental consciousness it is supposed to reach. This, however, has not meant that the methods used for carrying out the phenomenological reduction have been rejected altogether. For example, Jacques Derrida who was influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, particularly for its emphasis on philosophy as a rigorous descriptive science (Moran, 2000), said in an interview late in his career:

It is true that for me Husserl's work, and precisely the notion of *epoché*, has been and still is a major indispensable gesture. In everything I try to say and write *epoché* is implied. I would say that I am constantly trying to practice this whenever I am thinking and writing. I think it is the condition for thinking and writing. (Derrida, 1999, 81)

The practice of Husserlian phenomenology in human science research

Phenomenology has been a platform for various research methodologies for qualitative inquiry within different branches of human, social and health sciences. This variety has to do with the different philosophical explications found within the phenomenological movement (Lowes & Prowse, 2001). As for the Husserlian approach, Moustakas (1994) has provided a model for conducting human science research (but see also Giorgi, 2009; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), which has been widely used (see e.g. Bailhe, 1996; Conceição, 2006; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Qualitative inquiry based on Husserlian phenomenology is characterised by the *epoché* and other methods described by Husserl. According to Moustakas, it is the conscious practice of the *epoché*, which distinguishes this approach from other qualitative inquiries. But

despite its tight connection with philosophy, the role of the human science researcher in this context differs in some fundamental aspects from the one of the phenomenologist. While the Husserlian phenomenologist typically approaches the phenomena under investigation through his/her own experience and consciousness, the human science researcher derives his/her knowledge from other people's experiences. Crotty therefore argues that the parenthesizing needs not only to refer to the researcher, but also to the participants of the research (Crotty 1996 in Lowes & Prowse, 2001). In the same vein Smith et al. point out the dual role of the researcher; the double hermeneutic he/she engages in when trying to make sense of the participants, who are themselves trying to make sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009).

The current study partly follows Moustakas's model, which is divided in four core processes, based on methods adopted directly from Husserl. These are *epoché*; *phenomenological reduction*; *imaginative variation*; and *synthesis* (Moustakas, 1994). As already noted, the major function of the *epoché* is suspension of the natural attitude. As for the phenomenological reduction here, it aims at a textural description of the experience of the phenomenon. The process entails different steps but its focal point is the attention paid to the experience of the phenomenon as it is given to the consciousness. Imaginative variation involves the derivation of structural themes based on the textural description; identification and description of underlying, precipitating factors that account for the experience. At last, synthesis involves an intuitive integration of both the textural and the structural descriptions, resulting in a unified statement of the essence of the experience of the phenomenon.

While the research procedure is thus divided into four core processes, these do only to a limited extent represent separate phases in the research. Rather, they intersect with its different steps –preparation of research, data collection, and analysis – to a greater or lesser extent. In the current study the *epoché* has played a particularly important role throughout all these.

The study

The aim of this study is to explore lay people's experiences of what they recognize as *landslag*. The objective is to identify the basic features that describe and constitute the essence of *landslag*, through verbal expression and conception. It is important to note that the term 'essence' as used here, does not imply essentialism: It does not imply that *landslag* is defined by transhistorical and invariable essences. It does not imply that *landslag* exists independent of human consciousness or social reality, on the contrary. Neither does it deny the temporal dynamics of *landslag* as a concept. It is simply used here to denote the fundamental characteristics pertaining to the conception of *landslag* among the participants.

The role of the *epoché* in formulating the research question is manifested by the emphasis put on *landslag* 'as recognized' by the participants. Hence, my own ideas about what is meant by the concept were systematically excluded. When selecting participants for the research, the *epoché* also played an important role, albeit differently. In addition to conventional demographic criteria, such as age, gender, education and occupation, the

selection was based on the participants' knowledge of landscape: Individuals, who were likely to have adopted perspectives of landscape in relation to landscape theories of any kind, whether within the natural, social or human sciences, arts or architecture, were excluded. The notion of 'lay people' in the research question thus refers to individuals who are not experts in matters of landscape from a theoretical perspective. By 'experts' I mean those who have acquired expertise either by degrees or other certificates, as well as those whose expertise is based on experience (see Collins & Evans, 2002). Experts were excluded not because their knowledge is not valuable, but because it would need to be parenthesized in order to explore the cultural conception of *landslag*. Finally, the last criterion for the selection, was geographical distribution of participants, as different nature and environment, or regional modes of expression, might produce different conceptions of *landslag*.

Locating participants in accordance with these criteria called for some contemplation, not least because the idea was to interview them unprepared. My intention was to seize their first reaction upon hearing the word *landslag* during the interview itself, then to monitor their evolving thoughts. The last thing I wanted was to have the interviewees thinking the issue through prior to the interview and then to give me a rational, orderly statement. This approach meant that the participants had to be willing to take part without knowing in detail the main objective of the research.

My solution was to consult friends, colleagues, and relatives, and ask if they could propose someone from their personal network. Having introduced the research and the criteria to my contacts, considered the persons they suggested, and identified suitable individuals among these, I asked my contacts to approach the selected individuals and to ask if they would be willing to participate in the research. The only information my contacts were allowed to give to the prospective interviewees was that they would be asked to share and discuss some of their experiences of the land. I asked my contacts specifically not to mention the words: landscape, nature or beauty. In this manner, based on trust acquired via my contacts, I was able to assemble a diverse group of 13 'lay' individuals (Figure 7), who were all willing to participate in the research despite the vague information provided.

The qualitative interview is based on conversation and interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, through which knowledge is constructed (Kvale, 1996). In a phenomenological interview, the *epoché* is directed towards the researcher, who has to be careful not to let his/her ideas steer the interview, but rather to have it evolving in terms of the interviewee's experience (Moustakas, 1994).

In the current study, the interview was divided in three parts. It started with a general conversation, with the aim of creating a relaxed atmosphere. I asked the participant to tell me about his/her background; habitation and travel experience in general, so as to get an idea of his/her acquaintance with the land. Soon I changed the subject and asked my interviewee directly what came first to his/her mind upon hearing the word *landslag*. Generally this question evoked a mental image, which provided the basis for the following discussion. In the middle of the interview I put my cards on the table and explained to the interviewee that my main purpose was to understand the meaning of the concept in his/her mind. This gave us the opportunity to delve further into the topic; the interviewee had the

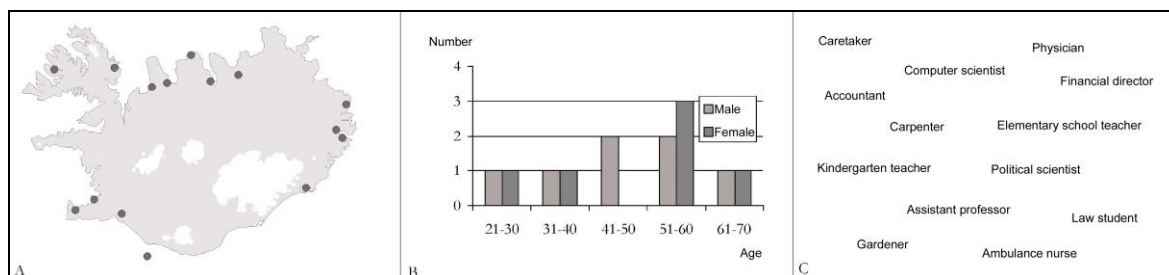


Figure 7 Main characteristics of participants: A) Permanent residence at some point in participants' lifetime, including current and past residence. B) Age and gender. C) Current occupation.

chance to evaluate things already said, and I could ask more direct questions. All this helped to reveal the underlying meaning of *landslag* in the mind of the interviewee, and to reflect on the context in which he/she would commonly use the word.

The reliability of mental images has for a long time been critically debated among philosophers and psychologists, who question their accuracy as descriptions of former experiences (Hurlburt & Schwitzgebel, 2007). In this study such reservations were deemed irrelevant, as the mental images were considered to be of significance, not as reproductions or representations of past experiences, but as embodying the meaning of *landslag* in the present.

The interviews took place from December 2010 to May 2011. The average duration of each interview was 45 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis was initiated during the interviews, with our mutual reflection on the topic. It was then deepened with a thorough reading and interpretation of all the transcripts. This procedure is somewhat in line with Kvale's description of the different steps of interview analysis (Kvale, 1996). With every transcript, expressions relevant to the topic were identified and listed; a procedure referred to by Moustakas as *horizontalization* (Moustakas, 1994). Consequently these were clustered into themes. Having thus examined all the transcripts, the central themes constituting the experience of *landslag* were identified, giving ground to a textural and a structural description. Derived from these I was able to produce a summarised statement describing the essences of *landslag*, based on the participants' experiences as reported during the interviews.

Recurrent themes when describing the experience of *landslag*

"What comes first to your mind when you hear the word *landslag*?", I asked each of my interviewees as an opening question in the second part of the interview. Out of thirteen, four responded instantly by naming a specific location. Nine, on the other hand, gave a descriptive answer. One interviewee thus replied:

Landslag, well, that's something that lies before you, in nature. Not necessarily in towns or cities, but rather where there is unspoiled nature, I would say. Do you know what I mean? This is what I visualize. And I visualize, somehow, when I think of *landslag*, I visualize variety. Not necessarily fields or that sort of things, but I see a mountain, or water, or something that interrupts the scene. That's *landslag*.

While somewhat hesitant to begin with, speaking slowly and reflectively, this interviewee all of a sudden appeared to become more enthusiastic while providing the answer. Towards the middle of the quotation above, he started to speak faster as if he was describing something familiar. So much so that I felt compelled to ask: "Are you visualizing a particular image right now?" "Yes," he replied. "Is it a particular place?" I asked further. "Yes, actually it is," he replied and laughed. Having named the location he then added, somewhat surprised: "I don't know why, this just popped up in my mind."

It turned out that in all but one instance, the hearing of the word *landslag* either immediately or after a short reflection called forth a mental image of a specific location. The surprise of visualizing the particular mental image also appeared among a few of the interviewees. In all instances the interviewee had experienced the respective location: in some cases he/she had visited it as a guest, whether once, more often, or frequently; and in other cases the interviewee had lived in the area, either as a child or as an adult.

Having thus an established ground to discuss *landslag*, I subsequently asked the interviewee to describe his/her experiences of the location. So began a conversation based on probing questions, which aimed to delve into the experiences and to explore their different aspects. During an interview several mental images could come forth, which all were treated in the same manner. Many different themes were identified in every experience, and although each description was unique and personal, by and large they shared similar characteristics.

Following is the analysis presented in terms of givenness of the phenomenon, emphasising its different aspects: the material constituents of the phenomenon; how they are perceived by the human senses and thus revealed to the consciousness; the way consciousness receives the percept and gives it meaning; and under what circumstances this process occurs.

Materiality

Mountains were frequently mentioned during all the interviews and may reasonably be considered as the most prominent characteristic of *landslag*. Many of the interviewees thought instantly of mountains when I asked the opening question. Typically mountains were spoken of in general terms, but often they were referred to by name, as 'individuals' the interviewee had come in contact with. Some addressed the general importance of mountains; one for example stressed their role for orientation and estimating distances, as they often represent the only visible tract of land seen from a distance. Arguably, mountains to a greater or lesser extent frame one's experience of both land and space. Anyhow, while mountains were frequently mentioned on their own merits, they also served as an essential backdrop for other characteristics of *landslag*, as will become clear shortly.

But mountains do not alone comprise the materiality of *landslag*. Other landforms were also brought up: fjords, valleys, lava fields, black sands, glaciers and shores. Similarly, water bodies were quite often mentioned; sea, lakes, rivers or waterfalls. Vegetation was often brought up, particularly its green colour. Also, and no less often, was barren land. And then finally, a blue sky. A few interviewees said they had imprinted in their mind as a symbol of *landslag* an image of a mountain, green grass and blue sky. In short, material features of *landslag* are found in the realm of nature.

Another characteristic of *landslag* is variety, i.e. the interplay of the various natural features. This was revealed in the interviewees' descriptions and several of them emphasised this as well. But as some pointed out also, the variety has to be 'harmonious'.

Of course the overwhelming emphasis put on nature begs the question: what about culture? Although critical geography has stressed that the dichotomous way of thinking of nature as opposed to society and culture does not hold any more (Castree & Braun, 2001; Hinchliffe, 2007; Whatmore, 2002), ideological speculations of what is natural and what is social never emerged during the interviews and seemed not to complicate the meaning of *landslag* in the mind of the participants. *Landslag* for them is essentially natural. But what does this mean? Seven of the interviewees reflected on the issue. One said: "One doesn't think of *landslag* when looking over *Reykjavík*." When asked what one thinks of then, he replied: "One just thinks of inhabitation" (*byggð* in Icelandic). Another said: "*Landslag* can never be human-made. Even if there are hills and hillocks being made, it is not *landslag* in my mind." For the interviewees, *landslag* is created by the forces of nature, and its opposite is human interference. The conceptual boundaries of *landslag*, however, were not sharply defined. While urban areas could definitely not be considered as *landslag*, a few seemed to be tolerant towards traditional farming in the countryside, as long as perceived impact on the land had been kept to a minimum. And several of the interviewees took as their examples of *landslag* remote regions of deserted farmland, inhabited until the middle of the 20th century.

In order to better understand the nature-society spectrum I asked my interviewees about their conception of both *náttúra* (nature), and *umhverfi* (environment), and to compare these to *landslag*. Many reported that their first impression upon hearing the word *náttúra* was a sensation of green, indicating the flora in general. Taken as a whole, *náttúra* was conceived of as all-encompassing, including not only the diverse landforms but also the biotic nature, both flora and fauna, the soil, the sea, the natural forces, and absence of human intervention. This echoes Skúlason's (1998) analytical description of the concept. *Landslag* and *náttúra* are therefore intersecting concepts in the mind of the interviewees, but not synonymous. Regarding *umhverfi*, there appeared to be a shared consensus that its meaning refers to human surroundings in general (cf. Ingold, 1993a; Jónsson, 2007; Skúlason, 1998). *Landslag* could thus hypothetically pertain to *umhverfi*, but most of the interviewees saw *umhverfi* as humanly made environment. On these grounds, *landslag* and *umhverfi* may be regarded as contradictory.

Appearance

The interviews revealed, both implicitly and explicitly, that *landslag* is essentially visual; all participants described their experiences in terms of vision, and many furthermore firmly

stated that *landslag* is something one looks at. Some depicted themselves as standing and looking over a tract of land or a specific location, and others described themselves moving, whether walking or driving, thus bringing about an ever-changing angle of vision.

The view of *landslag* is panoramic, according to most of the interviewees; part of the *landslag* experience consists of wide views and being able to see far into the distance. Colours were also an important element for several of the interviewees. A few described how bright and vivid colours of vegetation, often contrasted with dark shades of rocky mountains, enhanced their *landslag* experience; others reported greyish colours, associated with dammed glacial rivers, ashfall, and gloomy weather, as reducing the experience.

But while *landslag* is thus unmistakably sensed and perceived with the eye, hearing also co-constitutes the experience for several of the interviewees, as revealed, for example, with these words: “If you sit out in the nature and listen to the silence, and just watch, you enter a completely different world.” In this vein, silence, stillness, and sometimes the purling of a stream or the sound of the sea, were often mentioned as integral to the *landslag* experience.

Reception

One theme shared by all interviewees was an aesthetic appreciation of land. In many instances this was revealed right after I asked my opening question. One interviewee thus replied instantly: “Spectacular and stunning”. Some others, having named a specific location as representative of *landslag*, reasoned that it was either beautiful or fascinating. The same theme was also revealed by comparisons to the opposite of *landslag*. Thus another interviewee replied to the opening question:

Well, what comes to my mind when speaking of *landslag*; I’m of course raised in close vicinity to mountains, and naturally I think that’s *landslag*. But for example *Grímsnes*⁷³, when I come to *Grímsnes*, I think it’s an awfully ugly area.

He then continued to explain how he felt the need for staying close to mountains, for seeing them and being able to climb them for enjoying a panoramic view. *Grímsnes* on the other hand is flat, he argued, and he could never imagine himself living there for that reason.

Noticeable here is that the interviewee speaks of his upbringing as formative of the meaning applied to the word *landslag*, indicating as well that he favours surroundings that are similar to those of childhood, which in this case are the Eastfjords. *Grímsnes* represents the opposite of the Eastfjords; it is flat, and for that reason it is ugly. Hence, *landslag* is beautiful.

Worth noticing also is that the interviewee refers to *Grímsnes* as an ugly ‘area’ (*svæði* in Icelandic), rather than as an ugly *landslag*. Aesthetic appreciation of land always came forth when the interviewees described locations they defined as *landslag*. When delving into the conceptual meaning of the word together with each participant, this theme was

⁷³ Grímsnes is an rural area in the southern lowlands of Iceland.

further discussed. I asked whether *landslag* was always beautiful. Many interviewees affirmed this, but some added that its beauty varies. A few were reluctant to make such an absolute statement when giving the topic a rational thought:

P: No, not necessarily, you know. I thought so before when you asked me [the opening question], then I instantly thought of something beautiful. But now, as I start to analyse it, I think it could be more.

E: So your first reaction was to think of something beautiful?

P: Yes, yes, it was. It's something pleasant. I also think it's a beautiful word, in the language. I think it sounds nice. ... I don't think I would ever use the word *landslag* for something I found ugly. Then I would probably phrase my speech differently.

Many interviewees shared the perspective that there is no such thing as ugly *landslag*; when experiencing something ugly, they said they would simply choose a different word for it. Hence, *landslag* is beautiful, not because beauty is an inherent quality of land, but because *landslag* expresses an aesthetic experience of land.

As witnessed above, one way to gain a better understanding of *landslag* is to investigate its conceptual opposite. I asked this interviewee if he could specify something he would not refer to as *landslag*. After a very short reflection he replied: "A dirty harbour," and then added that he immediately thought of something polluted. One theme characterising the *landslag* experience among some interviewees, was indeed 'purity'. A few spoke of the *landslag* they experienced as clean, and two mentioned how the idea of polluting activities, even if not visible, reduced their experience.

Aesthetic experience surely is a wide concept that may comprise different feelings and emotions, which need to be explored in order to gain a more solid understanding. Most of the interviewees mentioned a feeling of well-being when experiencing *landslag*, although some had difficulties when expanding further on this. Thus one said: "I just feel good when I'm close to mountains". But a few mentioned a sensation of freedom as an attribute of the well-being and related it to experiences from childhood:

I'm practically raised on a mountain; that was my playground. And I was never scared of anything. I climbed the cliffs and I was all over. And I was never told that I shouldn't do that, or that it was dangerous. I was just allowed to be free.

One's upbringing indeed appears to have influenced the feelings some of the interviewees associated with *landslag*. A few interviewees declared furthermore how they had grown-up to be open to emotional experiences, and hence, to appreciate the land aesthetically. Another theme that emerged in such context was a sense of 'security'. Thus another interviewee explained how she felt embraced by the mountains where she had grown up and where she currently lived. She likened the mountains to a mother's arm, which made her feel very secure. This sensation she could trace back to the age of four, to a time from which she had memories of herself thinking of the mountains as friends. Others reported similar feelings without relating it directly to childhood experiences. One claimed that mountains provided him with a sense of security, while flat land, on the other hand, gave

him the troubled sensation of infinity, which he paradoxically related to a feeling of restriction. The fearful respect associated with the sublime that has been linked to Icelandic landscapes was not part of the interviewees' conception of *landslag* (see Brady, 2010).

Even so, fear was a topic of discussion, for instance in those cases when deserted farmlands in the remote regions of the Westfjords were brought up as examples of *landslag*. The interviewees in question described how they had recollected stories of former inhabitants. Typically these stories included themes of isolation, bad weather, death, and respect for how these people had been able to survive the unfavourable conditions. To some extent, the interviewees seemed to have mirrored themselves in those settings, as if they were trying to think themselves into the harsh living conditions without really experiencing them. For this reason one interviewee described the Westfjords as frightening, without having been afraid. Another described a journey to the Westfjords as moving back in time, to a time when people presumably were threatened by the forces of nature. One interviewee, influenced by such tales, described how he had been afraid before a planned journey to *Hornstrandir*⁷⁴. He feared the isolation and what would happen if he had an accident, thought of the time it would take before help arrived, and if it would arrive in time. When he got there, he and his companion spent five days in complete isolation. The trip turned out to be magnificent and an outstanding aesthetic experience. He reported having felt extremely good during the whole trip; safe, and without negative thoughts crossing his mind. This shows how the knowledge of danger influenced the way some thought of the *landslag* under discussion, while fear was not part of the *landslag* experience.

Nevertheless, two interviewees talked about having experienced fear, one of those in relation to a journey to the Westfjords. Interestingly, this interviewee emphasised that she would never speak of the Westfjords as *landslag*. The reason she gave was that they were too monotonous; beautiful in their own way, but not a beautiful *landslag*. The other participant who reported a sensation of fear and claustrophobia also related these feelings to locations he did not describe as *landslag*.

One theme that emerged implicitly during many of the interviews, and which intersects many of the themes mentioned above, was 'relating to nature'. Some interviewees also talked about this explicitly:

I have noticed when I climb the mountains in *Loðmundarfjörður*⁷⁵, maybe up to six, seven or eight hundred meters. And it's a rather particular experience, for you don't hear any noise from the traffic. Not that you hear the traffic there anyhow, for there is none. But when all you can hear is nature, the birds singing, the purling of a stream and so on, and this really intense silence. That's really unique. Then you feel as if you were part of nature. And you never feel loneliness when in such circumstances.

A few others described similar moments of feeling related to nature, and emphasised this sensation of togetherness with nature when experiencing *landslag*, as opposed to

⁷⁴ *Hornstrandir* is a nature reserve in the Westfjords, Northwest Iceland.

⁷⁵ *Loðmundarfjörður* is a deserted fjord in eastern Iceland.

loneliness, which, according to these interviewees, one is more likely to feel in the crowds of big cities.

Conditions

The weather featured strongly in all the interviews but one, as a condition that helps to bring about the *landslag* experience. Some interviewees mentioned it in their descriptions. With others it came forth when delving into other characteristics of the concept. One interviewee referred to the weather already when answering the opening question:

Just the Westfjords, particularly, I think, down on *Rauðasandur*⁷⁶, on the way to *Skor*⁷⁷. Actually there are many places that come to my mind, but this is always a fascinating place somehow, and the *Barðaströnd*⁷⁸ as a whole. We've been there a few times and always had a very nice weather. Then the reminiscence becomes so strong.

By and large, the mental images featured good weather. This was sometimes stated directly, and in other cases revealed by mentioning of other characteristics, such as stillness, silence, panoramic views, and a blue sky. Certain weather conditions thus seem to contribute to the aesthetic experience the interviewees associated with *landslag*. "All is beautiful when the sun shines and the weather is fine", one said, and many voiced similar opinions. Bright and calm weather thus gives rise to the aesthetic experience, while strong wind, rain and fog reduce it. The weather is thus part of the experience without being an object of it. Ingold's thoughts on landscape perception are of relevance here. He argues:

As an experience of light, sound and feeling that suffuses our awareness, the weather is not so much an *object* of perception as what we perceive *in*, underwriting our very capacities to see, to hear and to touch. As the weather changes, so these capacities vary, leading us not to perceive different things, but to perceive the same things differently. (Ingold, 2011, 130)

Whilst the weather thus influences the perceptual capacities, and hence the experience of *landslag*, it also appears to have worked directly on the interviewees' emotions. For example, one interviewee reported how certain light conditions and wind make him feel uneasy. Others reported a feeling of depression in the grey world of gloomy weather. One reported a sensation of loneliness when surrounded by fog. And one reported a feeling of restriction in heavy storm. Arguably this shows how perception and emotion are intertwined in the aesthetic experience of *landslag*.

⁷⁶ *Rauðasandur* is a vast red-golden sandy beach in the Westfjords.

⁷⁷ *Skor* is a deserted farm east of *Rauðasandur*

⁷⁸ *Barðaströnd* is a coastline in the Westfjords.

***Landslag* as a way of experiencing**

The analysis above has revealed several themes that the participants in the study associated with *landslag*. Particularly prominent among the group as a whole were mountains, visual perception, aesthetic experience, well-being and good weather. Although the phenomenological approach certainly calls for the inclusion of themes related to the subject, it is important to mention here that the interviewees were unaware of the philosophy underpinning the research. Therefore, every theme was brought up unprompted, as witnessed by the various selected quotations above. The epistemological influence from Husserl's analysis of meaning was to be attentive to the distinction between expression, its meaning and the objective correlate, but not to educe it. The characteristics revealed during the interviews confirm this distinction in the case of *landslag*.

Hence I conclude that *landslag*, as an expression, describes a particular experience of the world; a meaningful experience of human-nature relations. This experience relates to morphological features of land, perceived as natural rather than human-made. The relation is realized by way of seeing the land and hearing the sounds of the natural world. Under certain circumstances, the human-nature relation thus created provokes an aesthetic appreciation within the person, which is characterised by a sensation of well-being. These circumstances are mainly explained by weather conditions. The *landslag* experience is thus more likely to occur in bright and calm weather.

When asked about *landslag*, the interviewees gave an answer attributed to mental images of locations they had previously experienced. The meaning of the concept, as it emerges in this research, is thus grounded in personal experience, rather than with reference to an abstract definition. This does not exclude an *a priori* conception informing the interviewees' meaning of *landslag*. Arguably, however, an *a priori* conception of *landslag* is culturally embedded, but not theoretical; it is embedded in the everyday Icelandic language. This conforms to Merleau-Ponty's argument discussed above, that "man is in the world", and indicates that with the phenomenological reduction this research returned to a pre-reflective consciousness but not a transcendental one. Languages *per se* are examples of social activities, and verbal expressions are certainly learned by social engagement. The meaning the interviewees associated with *landslag* is thus not explained by their personal experience alone, but also with reference to society.

But here we need to pause and enquire into the nature of the societal input, for example by asking: Do we learn to experience in particular ways, in terms of particular concepts? Or, do we learn to express particular experiences with particular words? Social constructionism would certainly be wont to argue for the former, as some landscape theories bear witness to (Cosgrove, 1984). But in the case of *landslag*, I would also argue for the latter. The reference to childhood experiences among many of the interviewees simply cannot be overlooked. These experiences occur at a time in the interviewees' lifespan when they may not even have learned the word *landslag* yet. The increased emotional and aesthetic engagement with the land coinciding with maturity, mentioned by some, is also relevant. It may therefore be presumed that the *landslag* experience starts at an early age and that it develops so that its intensity varies, with regard to both age and maturity.

The value of *landslag* for conservation and culture

As stated in the introduction, the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* was not used as an exemplar to define the concept in Icelandic legislation, but the ELC definition of *landscape*. It says:

“Landscape” means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. (Council of Europe, 2000a, art. I, § a)

This definition is clearly a broad one, and not surprisingly so, as it was deliberately meant to subsume different notions of landscape, such as morphology, scenery, and polity, in the widest possible interpretation (Jones & Stenseke, 2011). It would therefore seem, and rightly so, that the various themes of *landslag* identified in the study could be addressed within the ELC definition. Apparently, the only contradiction is the reference made in the ELC to ‘human factors’ as elements in the creation of landscape character. Indeed, the origins of the ELC indicate that its ideological roots lie in the conception of cultural landscape, which presupposes human agency (Council of Europe, 2000b). The study conversely showed that the interviewees see *landslag* as shaped by the forces of nature, but not human agency. These findings, however, do not necessarily oppose the adoption of the ELC definition, for surely Icelandic authorities may wish to protect cultural landscapes, notwithstanding such conceptualisation not being part of the lay meaning of *landslag*.

Noticeably, however, none of the various themes of *landslag* are addressed directly in the broad definition of landscape in the ELC. Adopting the ELC definition does thus not guarantee attentiveness to these themes when setting out to protect *landslag*. This calls for some thought on the value of the culturally embedded meaning of *landslag* for conservation, and the possible consequences of disregarding it.

First, language and culture are mutually related. In fact it would be hard to imagine one without the other. In a way, languages may be seen as comprising some aspects of the respective culture. Thus, the meaning of *landslag* is not merely culturally embedded in the Icelandic language, but embodies a part of the Icelandic culture, by framing and expressing a human–nature relation that people in Iceland seem to hold dear. Shunning the common conception might therefore with time dilute the meaning of *landslag* and thus risk the impoverishment of language and culture.

Second, when setting out to protect *landslag* it would be useful to ask what it actually is that one wants to protect. After all, conservation is a social practice, as pointed out by Rannikko: “There is no such ‘nature’ or landscape which wants us to protect it. This is something we ourselves want – if we do in fact want it – and we have to decide how best to accomplish this” (Rannikko, 1996, 70). What will the conservationist be thinking of as he/she embarks on the conservation project? Which mental images will come to mind? Will he/she be influenced by the lay meaning of *landslag*? According to a previous study, there is reason to believe that the stimulus to protect *landslag* stems from its lay meaning (Waage & Benediktsson, 2010). Protection of *landslag* irrespective of its core elements is thus not likely to live up to expectations.

The third point relates to the two above. Given that the lay meaning is deep-rooted in Icelandic culture; will the conservationist be able to set aside the conceptualization he/she grew up with, in the case of adopting a different one? If not, could it possibly become an obstacle for carrying a conservation project forward? If so, might it prove to be unproductive to ignore the meaning of *landslag* when protecting Icelandic landscapes?

Acknowledging the subject as part of *landslag* is challenging in planning and conservation. Yet, as argued above, there are both moral and practical reasons to do so. A legal definition of *landslag* should thus preferably consider its culturally embedded meaning and would need to be built on extensive knowledge of the concept. Superimposing the definition of landscape from the ELC might perhaps seem a handy solution in the short run, but turn out to be of limited value. The preliminary phase of any landscape policy in accordance with the ELC entails identification, description and assessment of landscapes within the respective member state (Council of Europe, 2008). In Iceland, such work would arguably need to be based on a sound definition of *landslag*; a concept that not only refers to the material but also to the subject. The ELC is an international convention that seeks to accommodate all the different notions of landscape found within Europe. This, however, does not entail that a definition of *landslag* in Icelandic legislation needs to reflect this cultural heterogeneity. At the end of the day, such articulation in a wider context might even turn out to undermine the cultural diversity that the ELC is supposed to celebrate.

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Appendix A

List of paper and poster presentations in conferences and seminars

Edda R.H. Waage (2012, 19 May). *The Icelandic landscape concept landslag and the value of its culturally embedded meaning for conservation*. Paper presented at NIES Research Symposium VI: Environmental Policy-Making in a Dynamic World. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2012, 9 March). *Óþægur ljár í þúfu*. Paper presented at Hugvísindaping 2012. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2011, 28 October). *Að rannsaka merkingu hugtaks: Landslag og upplifun almennings*. Paper presented at Þjóðarspeillinn 2011. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2011, 26 May). *The subjugated knowledges of landscape*. Paper presented at 4th Nordic Geographers Meeting. Roskilde, Denmark.

Edda R.H. Waage (2011, 12 April). *Íslenska landslagshugtakið*. Paper presented at Kynning á verkefnum framhaldsnema við Líf- og umhverfisvísindadeild. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2011, 25 March). *Fyrirbærið landslag*. Paper presented at Hugvísindaping 2011. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2010, 16 April). *Fegurðin í landslaginu*. Paper presented at Flókadagur. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2010, 5 March). *Fjöll voru þar og fagurt var þar um að litast*. Paper presented at Huvísindaping 2010. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2010, 8–9 October). *Conceptions of 'land' in the sagas of Icelanders*. Poster presented at Rannsóknarping VON 2010. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2009, 9 June). *The idea of landscape in the sagas of Icelanders*. Paper presented at the 3rd Nordic Geographerw Meeting. Turku, Finland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2009, 5 May). *Landslagsmyndir sögualdar*. Paper presented at Vorping félags landfræðinga. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2007, 29 June). *Landscape in conservation planning: technologies of government and the expert's dilemma*. Paper presented at Landscape Character Assessment and Evaluation Workshop. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Edda R.H. Waage (2007, 16 June). *Performing expertise: Landscape, governmentality and conservation planning in Iceland*. Paper presented at the 2nd Geographers Meeting, Bergen, Norway.

Edda R.H. Waage (2006, 1 December). *Landscape and conservation planning in Iceland*. Paper presented at the seminar “Cultures of Landscape” organised by the Department of Geology and Geography & Nordic Landscape Research Network. Reykjavík, Iceland.

Appendix B

Að rannsaka merkingu hugtaks: Landslag og upplifun almennings⁷⁹

Í bók sinni *Landslag er aldrei asnalegt* lýsir Bergsveinn Birgisson því þegar heimspekimaður einn kemur í Geirmundarfjörð og hittir fyrir nokkra trillukarla í plássinu. Þeir taka tal saman og svo fer að einn þeirra spyr hver sé tilgangurinn með því að læra heimspeki:

Heimspekimaðurinn horfði íbygginn í gaupnir sér drygklanga stund, líkt og hann vildi virkilega vanda svarið, en sagði svo: Ég veit ekki um aðra, en ég er að læra heimspeki til að skilja heiminn betur.

Þá var það svoleiðis að sumir litu upp til fjalla og sáu hvað hafði leyst mikinn frera úr giljum í hlýindunum, aðrir litu út á fjörð og sáu hvar brotnaði í báru innan við sker og því ekkert sjóveður, og síðan litu Ebba og Bensi hvor á annan, síðan báðir á heimspekimanninn og annar sagði: Hvað er það vinur sem þú skilur ekki? (Bergsveinn Birgisson, 2003, 19)

Þetta snilldarlega textabrot gefur kost á minnst tvenns konar túlkun: Annars vegar að trillukarlarnir, í sínum afmarkaða veruleika, hafi ekki forsendur til að skilja heimspekilega ástundun og vangaveltur. Hins vegar að heimspekimaninum, í leit sinni að skilningi á heiminum, yfirsjáist hið augljósa sem blasir við allt í kring. Snilld textans er svo fólgin í mótsögn þessara tveggja túlkana sem og þeim sannleika sem hvor um sig hefur að geyma.

Sumt liggur einfaldlega í augum uppi án þess að sérstakra útlistana sé þörf. Skortur á skilgreiningum þarf því ekki að þýða að skilningi manna sé ábótavant. Þvert á móti kann djúpstæð þekking að vera til staðar á ákveðnum fyrirbærum þessa heims, án þess að sú þekking hafi endilega verið færð í letur. En stundum krefjast aðstæður þess að kafað sé í vitundina, þekkingin dregin fram, svo að skilgreina megi fyrirbærið. Þá kann líka að koma í ljós að ekki er alltaf allt sem sýnist.

Umfjöllunarefni þessarar greinar er aðferðafræði fyrirbærafræðilegra rannsókna í mannvísindum, sem hafa það einmitt að markmiði að leiða í ljós þá merkingu sem fólgin er í upplifun fólks af veröldinni (Moustakas, 1994). Með umfjölluninni er ætlunin að varpa

⁷⁹ This paper has previously been published as a conference paper. Please consult the original publication for citation:

Waage, E. R. H. (2011). Að rannsaka merkingu hugtaks: Landslag og upplifun almennings. Rannsóknir í félagsvísindum XII: Félags- og mannvísindadeild: Erindi flutt á ráðstefnu í október 2011 (pp. 141–149). Reykjavík: Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands.

ljósi á hvernig fyrirbærafræðin sem heimspeki, og þá sérstaklega forskilvitleg fyrirbærafræði Husserls (sjá t.d. Husserl, 1999), á þátt í mótun rannsóknarferils slíkra rannsókna. Í ljósi þess umfangs sem slíkt verkefni kynni að taka á sig, sem og þess orðaramma sem hér er gefinn, mun ég afmarka umfjöllun mína við hugtakið *frestun* (έποχή) og það hvernig frestun stýrir gagnaöflunarferlinu. Til að færa þessa umfjöllun í efnislegan búning tek ég dæmi úr fyrirbærafræðilegri rannsókn innan mannvistarlandfræði þar sem hugtakið *landslag* var tekið til skoðunar. Markmið þeirrar rannsóknar var að leiða í ljós þá merkingu sem almennt er lögð í landslagshugtakið meðal almennings á Íslandi. Rétt er þó að taka fram hér í upphafi að niðurstöðum þessarar rannsóknar verða ekki gerð skil að þessu sinni, heldur er skyggst á bak við rannsóknarferlið út frá ofangreindum forsendum. En áður en að því kemur skulum við huga að hinni fyrirbærafræðilegu nálgun.

Fyrirbærafræðin og aðferðirnar

Fyrirbærafræði er heimspekistefna sem kom fram í byrjun 20. aldarinnar og er upphafsmaður hennar jafnan talinn Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). En rétt eins og allt annað varð fyrirbærafræðin ekki til í einhverju tómi, heldur má rekja tilurð hennar til eldri hugsuða sem Husserl mótaðist af. Jafnframt má líta svo á að hún spretti upp úr jarðvegi vísindanna, eins og þau voru á þeim tíma, og Husserl var gagnrýninn á. Ýmsir heimspekingar hafa síðan tekist á við verk Husserls og haldið kyndli fyrirbærafræðinnar á lofti, og um leið mótað áherslur hennar (Smith, 2011; Zahavi, 2008). Í rannsókn minni á íslenska landslagshugtakinu eru það þó einkum hugmyndir Husserls (1913/1980) sem ég sækji til.

Eins og orðið gefur til kynna fæst fyrirbærafræðin við *fyrirbæri*, sem samkvæmt þessum hugmyndum stendur fyrir það sem ber fyrir vitund mannsins í upplifun hans á heiminum (Björn Þorsteinsson, 2009; Zahavi, 2008). Eitt megineinkenni fyrirbærafræðinnar er einmitt það að hún beinist að mannlegri upplifun og gerir þannig að viðfangsefni sínu bæði vitund mannsins og viðfang hennar, hvort sem það er af efnislegum toga eður ei. Fyrirbærafræðin er þannig handan bæði hughyggju og efnishyggju; hún afneitar ekki hinum efnislega veruleika þessa heims, en um leið segir Husserl okkur að aðgengi að hinum efnislega veruleika takmarkist við upplifun mannsins á honum. Það er sem sé í gegnum upplifun okkar sem við öflum þekkingar á heiminum. Fyrirbærafræðileg greining grundvallast á þessari forsendu. Aftur á móti er markmið slíkrar greiningar að lýsa upplifuninni á fyrirbærinu og gera grein fyrir eðli hennar og formgerð. Önnur forsenda í hugmyndaheimi Husserls er því sú að hver atburður hafi ákveðið *eðli* (*Wesen*) sem grafast megi fyrir um. Sá galli er þó á gjöf Njarðar að þetta eðli kann að vera hulið sjónum okkar. Þetta orsakast ekki síst vegna þeirrar þekkingar sem haldið er að okkur og mótar hið daglega viðhorf okkar til hlutanna. Hluti af fyrirbærafræðilegri greiningu miðar því jafnframt að því að komast fyrir þessa þekkingu. Á þennan hátt er stefnan sett á hina hreinu vitund mannsins sem er frjáls frá allri þekkingu. Með öðrum orðum er það hin hreina vitund sem er vettvangur fyrirbærafræðinnar. Þar er fyrirbærið nálgast, þar fer greiningin fram. Þá aðgerð sem beitt er við fyrirbærafræðilega greiningu af þessu tagi kallar Husserl *afturfærslu*⁸⁰ (*Reduktion*)

⁸⁰ Þýðingin *afturfærsla* á þýska hugtakinu *Reduktion* er fengin úr skrifum Björns Þorsteinssonar (2005, 2009). Enskur ritháttur er *reduction*.

og er hún framkvæmd í nokkrum liðum. Beinist hún annars vegar að vitundinni og hins vegar að viðfanginu (sjá einnig Björn Þorsteinsson, 2005).

Í skrifum Husserls er *frestun*⁸¹ (ἐποχή) nátengd afturfærslunni og gegnir þar veigamiklu hlutverki sem forsenda hennar og aðdragandi (Zahavi, 2008). En hvað á hann við með þessu hugtaki? Sjálfur segir hann frestun fela í sér að gerðar séu óvirkar þær staðhæfingar sem alla jafna eru taldar góðar og gildar; að sviga sé slegið utan um allt það sem þessar staðhæfingar segja okkur (Husserl, 1913/1980, §32). Með öðrum orðum vísar frestun til þess að öll þekking okkar á því fyrirbæri sem er til athugunar, sé kerfisbundið lögð til hliðar og undanskilin í hinni fyrirbærafræðilegu greiningu. Á vissan hátt má þannig segja að frestun feli í sér tilraun til að efast um fullvissu okkar um heiminn (Sokolowski, 1974). En eins og Husserl bendir sjálfur á felur fyrirbærafræðin ekki í sér neina efahyggju; hún dregur hvorki í efa né afneitar efnislegri tilvist viðfangsins, ef svo ber undir, eða þessa heims yfir höfuð. Og ólíkt hinum kartesíska efa þá breytir frestunin ein og sér ekki hugmyndum okkar um viðfangið. Hún krefst þess eins að við nálgumst fyrirbærið á þess eigin forsendum og engum öðrum. Þannig geta niðurstöður vísindalegra rannsókna til að mynda, sama hversu trúverðugar þær eru, aldrei orðið forsenda í fyrirbærafræðilegri greiningu. Það þýðir þó ekki að við afneitum þeirri þekkingu sem þær hafa fram að færa. Við samþykkjum hana hins vegar ekki sem algildan sannleika, heldur sem ákveðið sjónarhorn sem við tökum ekki afstöðu til meðan á greiningunni stendur. Með frestuninni útilokum við þannig markvisst þá heimsmynd sem við alla jafna göngum að sem gefinni. Þetta segir Husserl vera nauðsynlegt til að ná fram hinni hreinu vitund og opna þannig fyrir okkur lendur fyrirbærafræðinnar.

Fyrirbærafræði í mannvísindalegum rannsóknum

Á grundvelli fyrirbærafræði Husserls hefur Moustakas (1994) þróað rannsóknarlíkan til notkunar í mannvísindalegum rannsóknum. Samkvæmt þessu líkani mótast rannsóknin einkum af fjórum ferlum sem Moustakas tilgreinir og sækir beint til hugmynda Husserls:

- *Frestun (epoché)*, vísar til þess að fyrirframgefna hugmyndir um fyrirbærið eru lagðar til hliðar þannig að skoða megi fyrirbærið með opnum huga og á þess eigin forsendum.
- *Fyrirbærafræðileg afturfærsla (phenomenological reduction)*, beinir athyglinni að upplifun á fyrirbærinu eins og hún kemur fyrir. Upplifuninni er lýst og dregin fram einstakir þættir hennar þannig að merking og eðli upplifunarinnar séu leidd í ljós.
- *Ímynduð tilbrigði (imaginative variation)*, hefur það markmið að leiða í ljós formgerð upplifunarinnar, eða hin algildu skilyrði hennar, á grundvelli allra þeirra tilbrigða sem má hugsa sér í tengslum við viðfangið.
- *Samantekt (synthesis)*, er lokaskrefið en hún samanstendur af samþættingu þeirrar lýsingar sem gefin var á upplifuninni, sem og þeim formgerðum sem einkenna

⁸¹ Þýðingin *frestun* á gríska hugtakinu *epokhé* (ἐποχή) er sömuleiðis fengin úr skrifum Björns Þorsteinssonar (2005, 2009). Enskur ritháttur er ýmist *epoché* eða *epoche*.

hana, þannig að úr verði samræmd lýsing á hinu hreina eðli upplifunarinnar og fyrirbærinu í heild.

Þessi fjögur ferli móta síðan allt verklag rannsóknarinnar, hvort sem er við undirbúning, gagnaöflun, eða meðhöndlun og greiningu gagnanna. Í bók sinni gerir Moustakas ítarlega grein fyrir rannsóknarferlinu í heild sinni og því hvernig þessi ferli stýra hinum verklegu aðferðum. Hefur þessum aðferðum verið beitt með góðum árangri við rannsóknir á hugtökum sem hafa beina tilvísun í upplifunarheim fólks (sjá Bailhe, 1996; Conceição, 2006; Moerer-Urdahl og Creswell, 2004).

Fyrirbærafræðileg greining á heimspekilegum forsendum er þannig fyrirmynd fyrirbærafræðilegra rannsókna í mannvísindum, eins og þeim sem Moustakas fjallar um. Frestunin gegnir þar veigamiklu hlutverki enda má segja að hún sé eitt af megininkennum slíkra rannsókna. Um leið er frestunin eitt þeirra atriða sem aðgreinir slíkar rannsóknir frá öðrum sem falla innan ramma hinnar eigindlegu rannsóknarhefðar (Moustakas, 1994). Þetta helgast ekki síst af þeirri afstöðu til þekkingarsköpunar sem rannsakandinn tileinkar sér og heimfærir kerfisbundið á vinnu sína: Sú skýlausa krafa að leggja meðvitað til hliðar alla þekkingu sína, sama hvaða nafni hún nefnist, í þeim tilgangi að gera rannsókn sína eins hlutlaus og kostur er, en um leið trúa viðfangsefni sínu. Að vera opin og tilbúinn að skoða heiminn upp á nýtt.

En þótt heimspeki fyrirbærafræðinnar sé þannig alltaf undirliggjandi er hlutverk rannsakandans í líkani Moustakas ekki alls kostar sambærilegt starfi heimspekingsins. Heimspekileg fyrirbærafræði felur í sér fyrstu persónu umfjöllun þar sem athugandinn vinnur með sína eigin vitund og upplifun. Og vissulega gildir það einnig um rannsakandann í líkani Moustakas. En þau gögn sem rannsakandinn vinnur með eru fyrst og fremst lýsingar annarra einstaklinga á þeirra eigin upplifun. Allajafna er þessara gagna aflað með eigindlegum viðtölum. Frestunin þarf því ekki aðeins að ná til rannsakandans heldur einnig þeirra viðmælenda sem taka þátt í rannsókninni. Skoðum þetta atriði betur hér á eftir þegar við skygnumst á bak við gagnaöflunarferlið í rannsókninni á íslenska landslagshugtakinu. Áður en lengra er haldið skulum við samt fyrst huga að því samhengi hlutanna sem leiddi til þeirrar rannsóknar.

Forsaga rannsóknarinnar

Hugtakið *landslag* er rótgróið í málvitund Íslendinga og má rekja tilurð þess líklega allt aftur á Þjóðveldisöld, en elstu varðveittu dæmi er að finna í 14. aldar handritum (Edda R. H. Waage, 2011). Allar götur síðan hefur landslagshugtakið verið samofið málinu og menningunni og nú á tímum er flestum tamt að beita því í daglegu tali.

Í kringum aldamótin 2000 má segja að hugtakið hafi öðlast nýjan sess í íslenskri menningu þegar farið var að beita því markvisst við skipulagsvinnu á náttúrusvæðum, svo sem við gerð Rammaáætlunar (Verkefnisstjórn um gerð rammaáætlunar, 2003) og Náttúruverndaráætlunar (Umhverfisstofnun, 2003). Þetta aukna vægi landslagshugtaksins í skipulagsvinnu var þó ekki bundið við Ísland, heldur endurspeglaði þær áherslur sem uppi voru í Evrópu á þessum tíma og kristölluðust meðal annars í Evrópska landslagssáttmálanum (Council of Europe, 2000) sem undirritaður var í Flórens árið 2000 af 18 Evrópuríkjum, þó ekki Íslandi.

En þrátt fyrir vilja sérfræðinga hér á landi til að nota landslagshugtakið með markvissum hætti við skipulag, glímdu þeir við ákveðinn vanda. Þetta kom til dæmis í ljós í rannsókn sem gerð var á undirbúningi Náttúruverndaráætlunar 2004–2008 (Edda R. H. Waage og Karl Benediktsson, 2010), en þar reyndist það þrautin þyngrri að innleiða landslagshugtakið í þau vísindalegu vinnubrögð sem óhjákvæmilega er krafist í slíkum aðstæðum. Ástæður þessa voru nokkrar og misjafnlega veigamiklar. Á þessum tíma hafði landslag enn ekki verið skilgreint í íslenskum lögum og töldu sérfræðingarnir sjálfir að það stæði vinnubrögðum þeirra helst fyrir þrifum, sem sé að vandamálið væri fyrst og fremst tæknilegs eðlis. Höfðu ýmsir enda óskað formlega eftir slíkri skilgreiningu (Jakob Gunnarsson, Matthildur Kr. Elmarsdóttir, Sigurrós Friðriksdóttir og Trausti Baldursson, 2004; sjá einnig Þóra Ellen Þórhallsdóttir, Þorvarður Árnason, Hlynur Bárðarson og Karen Pálsdóttir, 2010).

Ákall sérfræðinga síðustu ára hefur síðan skilað þeim árangri að í nýjum Skipulagslögum (nr. 123/2010) var landslag í fyrsta sinn skilgreint í íslenskum lagatexta. Þótt ákveðnum áfanga virðist þannig náð vekur þessi nýja skilgreining upp ýmsar spurningar sem varða innihald slíkra lagagreina. Sjálf samanstandur hún af afbakaðri þýðingu á texta úr Evrópska landslagssáttmálanum og virðist eiga lítt sameiginlegt með þeirri merkingu sem hingað til hefur verið lögð í hugtakið. Þótt niðurstöður ofangreindrar rannsóknar hafi rennt stöðum undir þá skoðun að skilgreina þyrfti landslag sýndu þær jafnframt að erfiðleikar við innleiðingu landslagshugtaksins voru ekki eingöngu tæknilegs eðlis, heldur byggðu á djúpstæðum ósamrýmanleika þeirrar merkingar sem lögð var í landslagshugtakið og svo þeirrar hugmyndafræði sem sérfræðingarnir leituðust við að tileinka sér.

Í kjölfarið kviknaði sú hugmynd að taka hugtakið landslag til skipulegrar skoðunar til að grennslast fyrir um þá merkingu þess sem virtist liggja orðræðu sérfræðinganna til grundvallar. Gengið var út frá þeirri forsendu að þessi undirliggjandi merking væri ekki einskorðuð við viðkomandi sérfræðinga, þar sem ekki virtist um lærða sýn að ræða. Þvert á móti virtist þessi merking liggja djúpt í vitundinni. Vísa ég hér til hennar sem menningarbundinnar merkingar, á þeirri forsendu að fólk almennt tileinki sér hana gegnum uppvöxt sinn í íslensku samfélagi og þátttöku í menningu þessarar þjóðar, til að lýsa ákveðinni upplifun af veröldinni. Hin menningarbundna merking einskorðast því ekki við ákveðna hópa innan samfélagsins. Þannig varð íslenskur almenningur það þýði sem úrtak rannsóknarinnar skyldi standa fyrir.

Sú staðreynd að hugtakið landslag hefur síðan verið skilgreint í lögum breytir ekki þýðingu þessarar rannsóknar, því í ljósi fyrri niðurstaðna er full ástæða til að spyrja hvort lagaleg skilgreining á íslenska landslagshugtakinu eigi að endurspegla þá menningarbundnu merkingu sem hugtakið býr yfir, eða hvort ásættanlegt sé að styðjast við skilgreiningar sem fengnar eru annars staðar frá. Hvort heldur sem er, þá skiptir máli að sú merking sem almennt er lögð í hugtakið verði leidd í ljós þannig að hægt sé að taka upplýsta ákvörðun í þeim efnum.

Að rannsaka merkingu landslags að hætti fyrirbærafræðinnar

Sú ákvörðun að styðjast við forskilvitlega fyrirbærafræði Husserls í rannsókn á hinni menningarbundnu merkingu íslenska landslagshugtaksins felur í sér þá afstöðu að ég tel hana búa yfir ákveðnu *eðli*, samkvæmt orðalagi Husserls. Rannsókninni er því ætlað að

leiða í ljós eðli hugtaksins og formgerð þess. Að tala um eðli hugtaka getur samt orkað tvímælis. Sá skilningur sem ég legg hér í orðið er að eðli standi fyrir það sem sé einkennandi fyrir hugtakið; sá kjarni hugtaksins sem ávallt er til staðar þegar því er beitt.

Þótt ég hafi undanfarin ár varið miklum tíma í að reyna að skilja þátt landslagshugtaksins í náttúruvernd er mikilvægt að allri þeirri þekkingu sem ég hef viðað að mér eða átt þátt í að skapa sé haldið utan við rannsóknina. Þessi þekkingarfræðilega afstaða frestunarinnar lítar allt rannsóknarferlið. Í tengslum við gagnaöflun snertir hún mótun rannsóknarspurningar, val á viðmælendum, þá umgjörð sem viðtalinu er búin og svo framkvæmd viðtalsins.

Rannsóknarspurningin

Í stuttu máli má segja að þær fyrirframgefnu hugmyndir sem ég hef varðandi íslenska landslagshugtakið kristallist í þessari staðhæfingu: „Landslag er það heiti sem gefið er fagurfræðilegum tengslum milli manns og náttúru; tengslum sem verða til við sjónræna skynjun mannsins á veröldinni, og sem hverfast um form náttúrunnar“ (Edda R. H. Waage, 2010, 56). Með öðrum orðum að landslag sé sjónrænt, fagurfræðilegt og náttúrulegt. Hvatinn að rannsókninni er ekki að staðfesta þessa þekkingu. Þvert á móti vakir fyrir mér að opna fyrir frekari skilning á hugtakinu og því þarf ég að gæta þess markvisst að láta þessi atriði ekki stýra rannsókninni. Rannsóknarspurningin tekur mið af þessu: *Hvaða merking er almennt lögð í hugtakið landslag meðal almennings á Íslandi?* Orðalagið er af ásettu ráði opið og óskilyrt. Í því felst sú einfalda (allt að því barnslega) þrá að skilja hvað fólk er að meina þegar það talar um landslag, þar sem áhersla er lögð á lýsingu en ekki útskýringar eða orsakasamhengi (sbr. Moustakas, 1994).

Val á viðmælendum

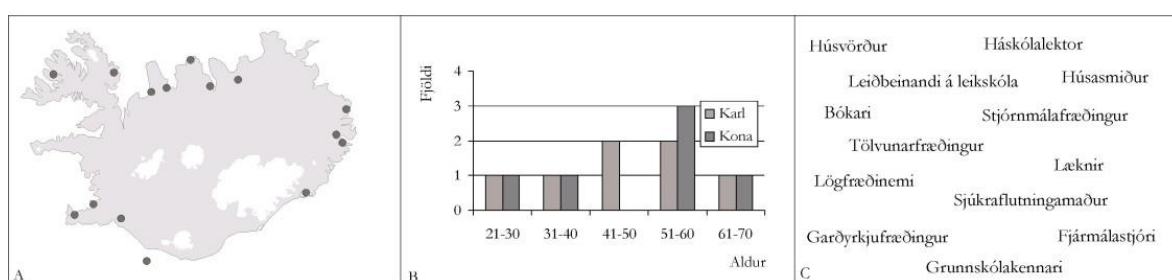
Frestunin birtist með talsvert öðrum hætti í vali á viðmælendum, en þar beindist hún einkum að viðmælendum sjálfum. Eins og gefur að skilja er ein grundvallarforsenda þess þegar viðmælendur eru valdir til þátttöku í fyrirbærafræðilegri rannsókn að viðkomandi hafi upplifað fyrirbærið. Alla jafna er því beitt *markvissu úrtaki* (*purposeful sampling*) þar sem ákveðnum viðmiðum er fylgt (Creswell, 2007), samhliða hefðbundnum lýðfræðilegum breytum til að tryggja ákveðna breidd innan úrtaksins (Moustakas, 1994). Í þessari rannsókn var viðmælendahópurinn skilgreindur út frá aldri, kyni, menntun og atvinnu og reynt að tryggja sem mestan fjölbreytileika í þeim efnum. En þess fyrir utan var jafnframt tekið mið af þekkingu væntanlegra viðmælenda. Birtingarform frestunarinnar í þessu samhengi var þríþætt:

Í fyrsta lagi undanskildi ég markvisst þá einstaklinga sem telja má til sérfræðinga í landslagsfræðum, eða sem ætla mætti að hefðu lagt sig sérstaklega eftir að kynna sér merkingu hugtaksins innan tiltekinna fræða. Ekki vegna þess að sú þekking sé ekki góðra gjalda verð, heldur vegna þess að það verður að teljast óraunhæft að ætla að þekking viðmælendanna sjálfra byrgi þeim ekki sýn á hið hreina eðli fyrirbærisins (sjá Lowes og Prowse, 2001), í þessu tilfelli þá menningarbundnu merkingu sem var til rannsókna. Í öðru lagi taldi ég landfræðilega dreifingu viðmælenda skipta máli í ljósi þess að mismunandi staðhættir og náttúrufar gætu mögulega haft mótandi áhrif á hugmyndir fólks um landslag, sem og menningarlegir þættir eins og breytilegar málarsvenjur milli svæða. Viðmælendur

skyldu því koma víða að. Í þriðja lagi krafðist umgjörð viðtalsins þess að þegar viðmælendur mættu til leiks væru þeir óundirbúnir, þ.e. þeir áttu ekki að hafa velt fyrir sér viðfangsefni rannsóknarinnar fyrirfram. Ætlunin var að fá fram fyrstu viðbrögð þeirra við viðfangsefninu í sjálfru viðtalinu og fylgja þeim síðan eftir. Þetta þýddi að væntanlegir viðmælendur skyldu sjálfviljugir taka þátt í rannsókninni, án þess að vita í raun um hvað hún snerist.

En þótt viðmið við val á viðmælendum væru þannig skilgreind fól valið líka í sér ákveðna framkvæmd, nefnilega þá að hafa uppi á þeim einstaklingum sem falla innan þess ramma sem viðmiðin segja til um og fá þá til þátttöku. Segja má að þáttur frestunarinnar við skilgreiningu úrtaksins hafi reynst mér fjötur um fót í þessum efnum, því hvernig aflar maður sér svo ítarlegra upplýsinga um einstaklinga að þeim fornspurðum og biður þá síðan að taka þátt í rannsókn án þess að segja þeim um hvað hún snúist?

Eftir miklar bollaleggingar valdi ég að leita ásjár vina, ættingja og starfsfélaga í þeim tilgangi að biðja þá að stinga upp á viðmælendum úr þeirra eigin tengslaneti. Eftir að hafa kynnt fyrir þessum tengiliðum mínum umrædd viðmið, farið yfir uppástungur hvers og eins þeirra, og fundið væntanlega viðmælendur sem samræmdust þeim viðmiðum sem ég hafði sett, höfðu tengiliðir mínir samband við viðkomandi einstaklinga og föluðust eftir viðtali fyrir mína hönd. Þær einu upplýsingar sem þeim var heimilt að veita á þessu stigi varðandi efni viðtalsins voru að fólk yrði beðið um að lýsa upplifun sinni af ferðum þess um landið. Ég bað tengiliði mína sérstaklega að nefna ekki hugtökin *landslag*, *fegurð* eða *náttúra*. Þessi aðferð reyndist afar vel þar sem þetta gaf mér tækifæri til að velja saman hóp viðmælanda, á bak við tjöldin ef svo má að orði komast, sem ég taldi endurspeglar margbreytileika íslensks almennings eftir því sem kostur er í svo litlum hópi. Þegar upp var staðið hafði ég tekið viðtal við fjölbreyttan hóp 13 einstaklinga (mynd 1). Galli þessarar aðferðar er hins vegar sá að með því að treysta á tengiliði missir maður valdið á upplýsingaveitu til viðmælendanna. Þannig varð ég þess áskynja í sumum tilfellum að fyrirmælum mínum hafði ekki verið fylgt til hlítar, en þó ekki þannig að ég teldi það koma niður á aðferðafræðinni.



Mynd 1 Föst búseta viðmælanda einhvern tíma á æviskeiði þeirra. B) Skipting viðmælanda eftir kyni og aldri. C) Starfi viðmælanda er viðtölin voru tekin.

Viðtalið

Eigindlegt viðtal er vettvangur þar sem ný þekking verður til gegnum samskipti viðmælanda og rannsakanda (Kvale, 1996). Þegar viðtal er tekið í fyrirbærafræðilegri rannsókn beinist frestunin aftur að rannsakandanum, sem þarf að gæta þess í hvívetna að stýra ekki viðtalinu út frá eigin þekkingu, heldur að láta upplifun viðmælandans búa viðtalinu ramma (Moustakas, 1994). Í þessari rannsókn var viðtalið þrískipt. Byrjun viðtalsins fólst í léttu spjalli þar sem viðmælandinn sagði mér frá bakgrunni sínum, ferðavenjum og ýmsu því tengdu. Snemma í viðtalinu skipti ég svo um gír og bað viðmælandann að segja mér hvað væri það fyrsta sem kæmi upp í huga hans/hennar við að heyra orðið landslag. Skoðum eitt dæmi:

E: Mig langar að biðja þig um að segja mér hvað sé það fyrsta sem þér dettur í hug þegar ég segi orðið landslag. Hvað dettur þér fyrst í hug?

V: Bara Vestfirðir.

E: Já.

V: Og þá sérstaklega, hugsa ég, niðri á Rauðasandi, á leiðinni út í Skor, og svona sem sagt. Það að vísu koma svo margir staðir upp, en þetta er alltaf einhvern veginn heillandi staður, og Barðaströndin í heild sinni. Við höfum nokkrum sinnum farið þetta og alltaf fengið svo gott veður. Þá verður minningin svo sterk. Þannig að Vestfirðirnir heilla alltaf, langmest einhvern veginn. Ég veit ekki af hverju það er.

Samkvæmt aðferðafræðinni var þetta í fyrsta skipti sem orðið landslag var nefnt í eyru þessa viðmælanda og því lá engin skilgreining fyrir um hvað átt væri við. Það kom þannig í hlut viðmælandans, þótt hann væri þess ómeðvitaður, að skilgreina viðfangsefni viðtalsins. Í tilfelli þessa viðmælanda kallaði landslagshugtakið fyrst fram hugarmynd af Vestfjörðum, og þá sérstaklega Rauðasandi. Í framhaldinu bað ég viðkomandi að lýsa upplifun sinni af Rauðasandi og Vestfjörðum. Í kjölfarið gat ég spurt ítarlegri spurninga um efnisatriði þeirra lýsinga. Í þessu textabroti er að finna vísbendingar um nokkur þeirra atriða sem fram komu í lýsingu hans: *heillandi*, *gott veður*, *minning*. Önnur atriði sem fram komu síðar í lýsingum þessa viðmælanda voru m.a.: *fjöll*, *fegurð*, *fjölbreytni*, *hreinleiki*, *víðsýni*, *eyðibygðir*. Með þessum hætti leitaðist ég markvisst við að búa viðtalinu ramma út frá orðum viðmælanda míns hverju sinni, í stað minna eigin hugmynda, og kafa ofan í þau efnisatriði sem þar var að finna.

Um miðbik viðtalsins lagði ég síðan spilin á borðið og greindi viðmælanda mínum frá því að ég væri að leitast við að skilja hvaða merkingu hann/hún legði í hugtakið landslag. Með þessu gafst viðkomandi kostur á að ígrunda fyrri orð sín, og mér að spyrja markvissari spurninga. Hjálpaði þetta okkur báðum til að grafast fyrir um undirliggjandi merkingu hugtaksins og við hvaða aðstæður það er notað.

Gildi frestunar við gagnaöflun í fyrirbærafræðilegri rannsókn

Að byggja empíríska rannsókn á tiltekinni heimspekistefnu felur í sér tilflutning á hugtökum úr abstrakt veröld heimspekinnar yfir í raunverulegar aðstæður rannsakanda á vettvangi. Þótt segja megji að texti Husserls (1913/1980) sé sumpart tyrfinn gefur hann engu að síður greinargóða lýsingu á þýðingu frestunarinnar í tengslum við fyrirbærafræðilega greiningu. Þannig getur hinn mannvísindalegi rannsakandi stuðst við texta Husserls í sinni vinnu. Rannsóknarlíkan Moustakas (1994) geymir síðan vísbendingar um nánari útfærslu á aðkomu frestunar að rannsóknarferlinu. Eftir sem áður sýnir reynslan mér af framkvæmd framangreindrar rannsóknar, að þrátt fyrir ítarlegar greinargerðir er útfærsla frestunarinnar fyrst og fremst undir rannsakandanum komin. Því má segja að beiting frestunarinnar feli í sér túlkun á erindi hennar hverju sinni. Sem hugmyndafræðilegt tæki leggur frestunin rannsakandanum línurnar í þekkingarsköpun sinni, en um leið getur hún torvelað gagnaöflunarferlið. Sé henni beitt í einlægni má þó segja að frestunin ljái gagnaöflunarferlinu ákveðna festu sem eykur trúverðugleika rannsóknarinnar.

Í ýmsum skrifum um fyrirbærafræði Husserls kemur fram að eftir daga hans hafi gagnrýnisraddir haldið upp efasemdum um tilveru hinnar hreinu vitundar, og þar með varpað rýrð á gildi afturfærslunnar og frestunarinnar (sjá t.d. Kockelmans, 1967; Lowes og Prowse, 2001; Zahavi, 2008). Moustakas segir á svipuðum nótum að þrátt fyrir markvissa ástundun frestunar hafi hann aldrei komist á þann stað sem kenna má við hreina vitund. Við komumst aldrei frá því hvernig við hugsum og orðum hlutina. Í hans huga er gildi frestunarinnar þó óumdeilanlegt í rannsóknarferlinu því markmið hennar og sú sjálfrýni sem hún kallar á draga verulega úr líkum þess að fyrirframgefnar hugmyndir rannsakandans hafi áhrif á niðurstöðurnar (Moustakas, 1994).

Sjálf tel ég mig ekki hafa náð stigi hreinnar vitundar í rannsókn minni á íslenska landslagshugtakinu. Og þar sem ég hef ekki upplifað hana á eigin skinni hef ég enga vissu fyrir því að hún sé til. En hugmyndin um mögulega tilvist hennar held ég að hafi gert rannsókn mína betri en ella hefði orðið. Þannig tel ég að frestunin sé mikilvæg í rannsóknarferli fyrirbærafræðilegra rannsókna, og að sama skapi tel ég að fyrirbærafræðilegar rannsóknir á grundvelli frestunar hafi hlutverki að gegna.

Hverfum nú aftur til Geirmundarfjarðar og þeirrar mótsagnakenndu heimssýnar sem þar birtist. Ég vona að umfjöllun mín hafi sýnt hvernig mannvísindaleg rannsókn sem byggir á fyrirbærafræðilegum forsendum getur brúað bilið á milli heimspekimannsins og trillukarlanna; hvernig beiting heimspekilegra hugtaka við rannsóknir á upplifun annars fólks getur dýpkað skilning á hinum ýmsu fyrirbærum þessa heims.

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Appendix C

Hvað merkir hugtakið landslag?⁸²

Orðið *landslag* er rótgróið í íslenskri tungu. Samkvæmt íslenskri orðabók táknar það „heildarútlit landsvæðis, form náttúru á tilteknum stað“ (Mörður Árnason, 2007). Þessi merking orðsins vísar annars vegar til hlutbundinna eiginleika lands og lögunar, hins vegar til þess að landslag er sjónrænt. Samkvæmt *Orðabók um íslenska málnotkun* tekur orðið landslag gjarnan með sér lýsingarorð á borð við „fallegt, fagurt, tilkomumikið, mikilfenglegt, áhrifamikið, stórbrotið, tignarlegt, svipmikið, stórgert, hrikalegt, tilkomulítið, tilbreytingarlaust, sviplítið, lítilfjörlegt“ (Jón Hilmar Jónsson, 1994). Af þessu má sjá að landslag er jafnframt gildishlaðið hugtak sem vísar til fagurfræðilegrar upplifunar fólks af landi.

Forn ritháttur orðsins er *landsleg* og er elsta þekkta dæmi þess að finna í Morkinskinnuhandriti (GKS 1009) sem talið er að hafi verið ritað nálægt 1275 (*Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*, n.d.). Orðið kemur þar fyrir í frásögn af falli Magnúsar berfætts Noregskonungs þá er hann gerði strandhögg á Írlandi. Merking þess vísar til yfirborðseinkenna lands:

En þar var svá landsleg sem þeir fóru at í stöðum váru hrískjör þau ok mýrar
nökkurar ok sumum stöðum fen djúp milli hrisanna, ok váru klappir yfir fenin
(*Morkinskinna*, 2011, 2. bindi, bls. 67).

Orðið kemur víðar fyrir í fornum ritum. Annað elsta þekkta dæmið er að finna í Hauksbókarhandriti Eiríks sögu rauða (AM 544 4°), sem ritað var á tímabilinu 1302–1310 (Stefán Karlsson, 1964). Þar segir frá leiðangri Þorfinns karlsefnis og föruneytis í leit að Vínlandi og birtist þar meðal annars þessi lýsing úr leiðangrinum:

Þeir kǫlluðu þar Straumfjörð. Þeir báru þar farm af skipum sínum ok bjuggusk
þar um. Þeir hǫfðu með sér alls konar fénað. Þar var fagrt landsleg; þeir gáðu
einskis, útan at kanna landit (Eiríks saga rauða, 1935, bls. 224).

Merking orðsins hér kynni að vera óljós, ef ekki væri fyrir annað handrit af Eiríks sögu rauða, Skálholtsbók (AM 557 4°) sem talið er vera nær hinum upprunalega texta sögunnar. Í stað setningarinnar „þar var fagrt landsleg“ stendur í því handriti „fjöll voru þar, ok fagrt var þar um at litask“ (Eiríks saga rauða, 1985, bls. 424–425). Orðið *landsleg* í dæmi Eiríks sögu rauða vísar því til fjalllendis, með öðrum orðum til lögunar á landinu, og sjónrænnar upplifunar af því, jafnframt því sem talað er um landslagið sem fagurt (sjá nánar Edda R.

⁸² This short paper has previously been published online at Vísindavefurinn. Please consult the original publication for citation:
Edda Ruth Hlin Waage. „Hvað merkir hugtakið landslag?“. Vísindavefurinn 7.5.2012.
<http://visindavefur.is/?id=60713>.

H. Waage, 2010). Þessi fornu dæmi sýna að merking orðsins á okkar tímum og notkun þess sem hugtaks virðist eiga rætur sínar að rekja minnst sjö aldir aftur í tímann.

Orðið landslag á sér hliðstæður í öðrum tungumálum. Í ensku er það til dæmis *landscape*, í dönsku *landskab*, í norsku og sænsku *landskap*, og í þýsku *Landschaft*. Þessi orð eru ýmist leidd af eða náskyld norræna orðinu *landskapr*, sem einnig var að finna í íslensku en er nú úrelt. Merking orðanna *landslag* og *landscape* er svipuð að því leyti að bæði vísa þau til náttúrulegra landsvæða og sjónrænnar skynjunar, sem og fagurfræðilegrar upplifunar. Hins vegar táknar enska orðið jafnframt landslagsmálverk (sjá umfjöllun í Þóra Ellen Þórhallsdóttir o.fl., 2010). Þessi merkingarmunur skýrist af ólíkum uppruna hugtakanna.

Orðið *landscape* var innleitt í enska tungu um aldamótin 1600, og þá í merkingunni landslagsmálverk (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Þróun landslagshugtaksins í Mið-Evrópu er enda samofin sögu landslagsmálverksins, en einnig þeirri samfélagslegu þróun sem varð með tilkomu markaðshagkerfisins og breyttri landnotkun (Cosgrove, 1984). Eldri orðmyndir úr germönskum málum sýna jafnframt að á 16. öld var hugtakið notað yfir afmörkuð landsvæði sem grundvölluðust á rótgrónum síðum og venjum viðkomandi samfélags (Olwig, 1996). Smám saman tók merking hugtaksins breytingum í enskri tungu með samtvinnun lands og málverks. Á 18. öldinni var til dæmis farið að móta sveitir Englands út frá fagurfræðilegum reglum landslagsmálverksins með gerð svokallaðra landslagsgarða (e. *landscape garden*). Þar umbreyttu efnamiklir landeigendur víðfeðmum landsvæðum sínum í takt við ríkjandi hugmyndir um hvernig náttúran ætti að líta út, og með fagurfræðilega upplifun að leiðarljósi.

Merking hugtaksins færðist þannig yfir á landið sem áður var fyrirmynd málverksins, og var landið með þessu gert að fagurfræðilegu viðfangsefni (Olwig, 2002). Með rómantík 19. aldar og þeirri upphafningu á náttúrunni sem henni fylgdi varð *landscape* að samnefnara fyrir náttúru. Hugtakinu fylgdi þó sú merking sem í það hafði verið lögð og lá því til grundvallar, það er aðskilnaður milli lands og þess sem á það horfir, jafnframt því sem þessi aðskilnaður felur í sér ákveðið drottunarvald áhorfandans yfir landinu (Cosgrove, 1984).

Ólíkur uppruni íslenska landslagshugtaksins og hliðstæðra hugtaka í Evrópu bendir til að merkingarmunur sé á þessum hugtökum, þótt við fyrstu sýn virðist sem þau vísi til hans sama.

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