

Navigating Between Conservation, Wilderness and Economic Development. The 5th Workshop of LRG's German Partner Organisation.

A report from Mark Leibenath

Delegates from landscape planning firms, civil society, public authorities as well as academia gathered in September for the 5th annual workshop of the "Arbeitskreis Landschaftsforschung" or "Working Group for Landscape Research", LRG's German partner organisation. The event, which was sponsored in part by LRG, took place in the rural municipality of Odernheim, not far from Mainz, in the midst of rolling hills and vineyards (see figure 1). Odernheim, or more precisely the so-called Disibodenberg, also is the place where 12th-century saint and sage Hildegard of Bingen spent 30 years of her life. The place is still littered with remnants of the Benedictine cloister in which she lived.

The workshop programme focused on "Protecting and using landscapes: Large protected areas caught between the conflicting interests of conservation, economic development and politics". It included a mixture of presentations, group discussions and field trips.

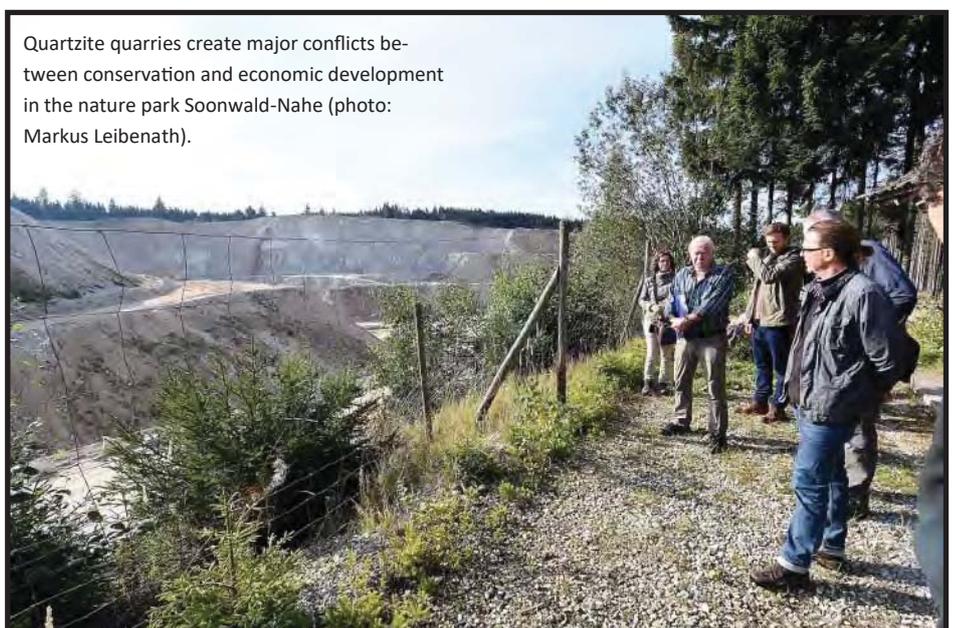
Large protected areas cover nearly a third of Germany's territory. As the country has committed itself to a far reaching energy transition or "Energiewende", there are many tensions between conservation and landscape protection on the

one hand and renewable energies facilities such as wind turbines on the other hand. One speaker presented a sophisticated, GIS-based methodology for analysing and minimizing such conflicts. Other presenters talked about the relations between wilderness development and tourists' expectations, about trans-boundary conservation efforts as well as about approaches to use protected areas for developing local or regional brands.



Vineyards and rolling hills overlooking the workshop venue (photo: Markus Leibenath).

The Land (or state) of Rhineland-Palatinate, where Odernheim is located, boasts a number of large protected areas such as a biosphere reserve, several nature parks and since recently also a national park. The area of the new national park is called "Hunsrueck-Hochwald" and was identified in a com-



Quartzite quarries create major conflicts between conservation and economic development in the nature park Soonwald-Nahe (photo: Markus Leibenath).

bination of expert-led assessments and grassroots democracy. As one representative of the state forest authority explained, there had initially been three potential areas. However, only the local councils of the Hunsrueck-Hochwald region endorsed the idea of becoming a national park.

List of Principal Speakers

Prof. Dr. Olaf Kuehne; *Universitaet Tuebingen*

Landscape theory and large protected areas

Dieter Gruendonner; *Gutschker-Dongus landscape architects and planners*

Wind energy plants in a nature park: How many turbines can a landscape bear?

Dr. Cormac Walsh; *Universitaet Hamburg*

Crossing Boundaries: Wadden Sea National Parks in Denmark and Germany

Joerg Liesen; *deputy chief executive of the German Association of Nature Parks*

Conserving cultural landscapes by means of regional marketing and tourist offers

Prof. Dr. Heidi Megerle; *University of Applied Sciences Rottenburg*

Protected geotopes – torn between conservation and use

Erik Aschenbrand; *Nature Park Reinhardswald*

The bark beetle – an enemy of conservationists? Tourist demands regarding landscapes and their implications for large protected areas

Dr. Markus Leibenath; *Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development*

“Natural Capital Germany – TEEB DE” – a step towards neoliberalising German nature conservation policies?

The main field trip consisted of a bus tour with interspersed walks through the nature park Soonwald-Nahe that features large swathes of beech forest including pockets of near-natural stocks of trees. Representatives of the park authority and the district authority showed us sites of conflicts between conservation, hiking, wind energy developments as well as

large quarries. There is a close monitoring especially of the hydrological impacts of the quarries, which already existed before the nature park was established, as one our guides told us while we were standing right on the rim of one quarry.

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Editor's footnote

It is extraordinary, No! it is unexpected and exciting! to go via Google Earth to the sites Markus refers to in his report. I will not spoil it for you but cannot resist wowing at the vineyards, the terraced hillsides, and rather to the north west of the town of Odernheim a huge photo voltaic power station, a fieldfull that is! This vineyard rich landscape is altogether non English. What a wealth of different fielded landscapes there are within and between different European lowland areas. Landscape characterisation in the UK is the job of public bodies not of academics, but it does seem to me that explanation of difference justifiably qualifies as a research topic.

PS I see for (my) first time that the Ordnance Survey show a photo voltaic site on their 1:25,000 scale map (Sheet 142 Shepton Mallet and Mendip East). The revision date is 2010. Does anyone know when they began to record them? NB a village at the same scale.

