

CHANGING LANDSCAPES: CHANGING POWER STRUCTURES

Workshop report from Marcus Leibenath

From September 25-27 some fifteen German-speaking landscape researchers gathered in Rottenburg, a small town in the lovely Neckar valley south of Stuttgart, for a workshop entitled 'Changing Landscapes – Changing Power Structures'. They are members of the 'Arbeitskreis Landschaftsforschung' (www.landschaftsforschung.de) this in English translates to: 'Working Group for Landscape Research'. The group was set up in 2011 in close cooperation with LRG and currently has about 80 members in total — most of them academics and practitioners with an interest in the cultural, sociological and political aspects of landscape analysis, planning and management. The workshop took place

manifested in present day landscapes of southern California to a reflection on different concepts of power and how they might be applied in landscape research, including also landscape ideologies in the Nazi era and their repercussions in post-war Germany. Other presentations dealt with agrarian landscapes in the Ruhr Area and heterogeneous types of tourism landscapes in the French Alps together with an anthropological account of community selforganization, organic farming and sustainable landscapes in a small village north of Berlin. The group will continue its discussion on power and landscapes in a special session on 'Political Landscapes' at next year's PECSRL conference in Gothenburg and Mariestad.

The field trip led to a prominent chapel hill, the top of which offers a scenic view of the Neckar valley and up to the heights of the Swabian Jura. The river Neckar, which used, periodically, to flood the plain, is now dammed and yields electricity. Many southern slopes in the region are still used as



at Rottenburg's University of Applied Forest Sciences and was attended by two LRG board members (Peter Howard and the author). The programme included a series of presentations and related discussions, a field trip as well as a strategy debate about the group's future orientation.

The topics of the presentations ranged from an analysis of power structures

vineyards as they have been for centuries.

In the final strategy debate it was agreed to hold next year's workshop in Hamburg, to be organized by colleagues from Universität Hamburg and the Helmholtz-Zentrum Geesthacht. The group also agreed on 'Seascapes and River Landscapes' as a theme. As usual, presentations on

topics other than the conference theme are welcome. A more detailed call for papers will be published in early 2014. The field trip is set to highlight Wilhelmsburg, one of Hamburg's central districts which partly lies below sea level and which recently was the locus of an International Building Exhibition (IBA_Hamburg).

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Photo caption:

Chapel Hill ('Wurmlinger Kapelle') near Rottenburg with Swabian Jura in the background (photo: Thomas Henrich)

THE SLOW POST ROUTE

by Philip Pacey

In an article in *The Guardian* on 5th September, George Monbiot asks 'Who could possibly be boorish enough to oppose a campaign to turn the Lake District into a world heritage site?' Yes, you've guessed it; the answer is – George Monbiot. He goes on to argue that the fells have been 'sheepwrecked' [sic], the forests that once covered them having been reduced to 'bare rock and bowling green'. Wildlife is scarce. Worse, celebration and preservation of the Lake District have made it an 'expression of cultural hegemony'. **It doesn't so much invite as command our gaze and demand our veneration and awe.**

George Monbiot may be asking important and pertinent questions; I hardly know and cannot tell. You see, I am a willing victim, in thrall to the beauty of the Lakes, a veritable disciple of Wordsworth and Ruskin. In normal circumstances I'd follow George Monbiot anywhere, confident in his ability, more than almost anyone else's, to save the world, but so far as the Lake District is concerned I can only plead with him to, in Yeats' words, 'tread softly because you tread on my dreams'.