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Published on H-German (April, 2005)

Germany contains many diverse and numerous pretty landscapes. The diversity has helped to reinforce regionalism. The prettiness has inspired poetry, song, and mythology. Occasionally, both have been employed to reinforce racial mysticism. One of the strengths of Thomas Lekan's book on German landscape preservation movements is that it notes the country's regional and historical diversity. It demonstrates as well the tension and conflicts regarding the racial and mystical approach to landscapes, which occurred even during the height of the Nazi era. No simple line of völkisch continuity, but a twisted road through complexity, is offered in this insightful text. The introduction presents a concise historiographic review. It makes clear that this work challenges assertions that German "back to nature movements" led inevitably to racist nationalism. [1]

Clearly written and following a generally chronological approach, Lekan covers three diverse eras. The title does not make clear that most of the examples are taken from the region of the old Rhine province of Prussia. Hence the Rhine River, the Eifel, and Siebengebirge areas provide most of the test cases and the institutional framework. The northern seacoasts, the Alpine meadows, and the eastern forests do not appear, while the mid-northern heaths appear fleetingly in this story. The Saar, Mosel, Nahe, Rhine, Ahr, Sieg, Erft, Roer, Niers, Lippe, and Ruhr River areas chiefly are considered. Whether landscape preservation politics and ideology operated differently in places seeking to preserve chalk cliffs, open heaths, lakes, or mountain terrain is generally left untouched. Despite that limitation, this is a very thorough and informed presentation. The large filling between the introductory and concluding pieces provides a very satisfactory analysis in five parts: the origins of landscape preservation from 1885-1914; the militarization of nature and Heimat from 1914-23; the challenges of modernity from 1923 to 1933; the shift from landscape to Lebensraum under Nazism; and the reconstruction of nature via expressways and wartime building. In each chapter, the main institutional developments, the leading individuals' ideas, and the relative successes and failures of the various preservation groups are delineated and assessed.
Much novel historical information on the Rhine region is offered. The book challenges the viewpoint that German landscape preservationists were anti-modern. It also undercuts claims about the origins of present environmental policies emerging during the Nazi era.

Lekan claims that his book "shows that the contradictory 'intentions' and ominous 'mood' [found] in the German landscape [also] found expression in these movements' varied reformist impulses, political aims, and popular reception" (p. 4). He argues further that "landscape preservationists participated actively in the cultural construction of nationhood by envisioning nature landmarks as touchstones of emotional identification, symbols of longevity, and signs of a new form of environmental stewardship" (p. 5). While some of those elements are indeed demonstrated, the evidence seems to illustrate more of a regional (Heimat) identity than a national one. Indeed, the study shows persuasively that German nature had many homelands, and no homogeneity could be imposed on them.

The origins of the preservation movement are shown to have been local and focused on natural monuments, for example saving the Siebengebirge from mining, urban sprawl, and tourism. Heimatschutz and Naturschutz were related to German character traits by some authors, but more specifically they were attached to regional traits (pp. 22-23). Lekan presents the shift from early nineteenth-century Rhine Romanticism to Rhine area preservation by the campaign to save the legendary Drachenfels, as well as devolution from regional to local state control of the area. Despite some small successes (namely the creation of a few protected areas), no major legislation established fundamental principles during the Imperial era. In presenting the formation of preservation associations, Lekan clearly reviews the outlook of the leading individuals and their views on what should and could be done. He adds significantly to historical knowledge about the reformist and pragmatic intentions of those individuals and the groups with which they allied. However, the reception of their ideas is not presented in depth, and hence the claim that the preservationists contributed to the formation of a national identity rests on thin supports (p. 71). That the preservationists tried to present a version of national identity via regional activities and ideological pronouncements is demonstrated. Their influence, however, remains an open question.

In the section on the militarization of nature values, Lekan again offers solid information from novel sources. However, this chapter is the lightest in terms of examples. As a result, the concept of militarization is shown to exist, but its significance aside from wartime propaganda and self-justification by the preservation leaders remains vague. Authors such as Wilhelm Bölsche in his 1915 book, The German Landscape in Past and Present, which presented the Eifel as Germany's Yellowstone Park, tried to tie Germans to a million-year-old landscape. Lekan notes that others thought such studies helped to reinforce the ideals of Heimat during difficult times. He suggests "Wartime thus intensified the nineteenth century's cult of domesticity by clarifying its opposite; Heimat was to function as a site of maternal stability, hometown cohesion, and pastoral beauty that made soldiers' horrifying sacrifices worth the effort" (p. 79). Some examples from the War Ministry seeking to tie hiking to physical prowess as opposed to a pleasant recreation or an escape into wildness tramping are provided. But, whether the Wandervögel activities were channeled to state and national purposes is left unanswered. By contrast, Lekan shows well how the geographical realm of the Rhenish homeland came to be delineated more sharply during wartime. Cottage Fachwerk, or half-timbering, is asserted to be innately Germanic, and place names and language supposedly reveal a precise border. "This wartime obsession with delineating the spatial perimeters of the homeland, a process that continued well into the Weimar Republic,
was an attempt to make the aesthetic concept of *Heimat* more concrete,” he writes.

“Constructing *Heimat* as a bounded, organic whole rooted in the landscape required ever sharper differentiation from ethnic Others who did not share Germanic cultural sensibilities” (p. 84). As evidence, Lekan cites the writings of a member of the Rhenish *Heimatverein* who served on the eastern front and wrote for his local association about his new “wartime homeland” in Poland. He found that it lacked the care and structure of his own area and thus justified the German “civilizing” mission in the east. How many more preservationists saw the world and the war this way?

After the war, the preservation organizations hoped to foster healing by providing ties to nature, to homeland, and to nation. Yet, in the context of French occupation and the Rhineland separatist movement, the question of national identity and belonging kept being reposed. Lekan presents the response of Rhinelanders to the national state’s efforts to counter the French attempts to penetrate the region. Many were insulted by the idea of Berliners instructing them about “German-ness.” In the end the Republic put monies at the disposal of regional organizations and thus “reinforced the Wilhelmine pattern of cultural regionalization” (p. 92). The nature protection groups could thus again present themselves “as defenders of *Heimat* rather than mere cultivators of sentiment” (p. 92). Next, Lekan illustrates the manner in which middle-class nature organizations legitimated the concept of cultural space under the leadership of the Bonn professor Hermann Aubin. His 1926 work, *Cultural Currents and Cultural Provinces in the Rhineland*, offered a regional *Landeskunde* that sought to propagate a coherent identity. Lekan concludes that:

“the *Heimatschutz* and *Naturschutz* leaders joined state officials in transforming landscape preservation into a new spiritual weapon designed to defend the *Heimat* against foreign ene-

mies and internal dissent alike. Moreover, the wartime obsession with demarcating scientifically the borders of the Germanic cultural landscape made natural landmarks into symbolic guardians of an organic cultural and ethnic identity rooted in the soil” (p. 98).

That siege mentality, in Lekan’s view, made it difficult to find an environmentalist vision during the Weimar era.

During the 1920s, many national and regional associations sought to preserve Germany’s natural and cultural heritage. The Weimar constitution had recognized the state’s duty in caring for the landscape. Lekan thus maintains:

“The incorporation of *Naturschutz* into Weimar’s progressive vision challenges scholarly interpretations that associate the era’s diverse back-to-the-land impulses solely with those right-wing, völkisch movements that opposed parliamentary democracy from the start” (p. 101).

He demonstrates this assertion of the shift from elite to mass organizations with the emergence of some 500 nature protection regions across the country. Attempts to foster Christian, labor, veteran, and youth interests illustrated the plurality of intentions among the preservation groups. Opposition to landscape disfigurement by electrification united a variety of them, including the Eifelverein, which Lekan details. Neither cultural despair nor völkisch outlooks, but pragmatic actions to protect local species and terrain predominated. He acknowledges some assertions that the Rhine River supposedly had sculpted not just a landscape but also a people (just like the Ruhr industrial basin). Some of this led to ethnic mythology, but most of the environmental struggles led to demands for legislation. In a section on "Naturalizing Modernity: The Birth of Landschaftspflege," Lekan outlines the attempt at land use planning, which included an alternative vision: "a middle ground of cautious technological optimism tempered by the desire to protect the aesthetic textures and ecological integrity of the landscape"
This part offers a major addition to the literature on Weimar, as well as on German ecological history. Another section reviews the exhibits at the 1931 Nature Protection Exhibition in Berlin and illustrates its diversity and modernity. Resentment and racism also existed and receive a section showing the impact of the depression on associations such as the Eifelverein. The next part, on the inroads made by völkisch ideas promoting the fear of a flood of foreign ideas, might have been given some statistical contours instead of the stated claim that by the late 1920s "many preservations were specifying that 'foreign races' were to blame for Germany's environmental degradation and cultural crisis" (p. 147). However, Lekan does underscore that no linear path went from increased radicalism to National Socialism, and race remained one among many coordinates of Heimat identity.

Even during the Nazi era, when nature protection was legislated, no single strand predominated, Lekan insists. Regarding the coordination of the preservationist movements, he concludes: "their synchronization remained uneven, contested and incomplete" (p. 153). To show one person who fell into line, Lekan follows the long career of Paul Schultze-Naumburg. While that leader shifted to racism, Lekan notes others who responded in diverse ways. Regional self-administration and old concepts of regional Heimat co-existed with attempts to homogenize policies and outlooks in the Third Reich. Heimat provincialism defied the attempt to instill racist Social Darwinism and the two co-existed in an uneasy tension.

In the last chapter, Lekan demonstrates that the needs of war and technocratic landscape planners building Autobahn and runways accelerated but did not destroy attempts to maintain a local Heimat. The Reich Nature Protection Law of 1935, which had created 800 protected areas and defined some 50,000 natural monuments, seemed to have been a victory for the preservationists. Yet, the new state proved a threat. An example was the conflict over the insistence to utilize part of Brühl's park as a playground and exercise area. [2] The preservationists protested the destruction of bird, hunting, and other areas. The Nazis proclaimed priority for youth fitness, just as they insisted that land reclamation triumphed over wetland preservation. When Lekan turns to the technocratic shaping of the landscape, some maps of Autobahn construction and the places which preservationists sought to defend against technological incursions would have helped, for example, to visualize the impact of Alwin Seifert’s road designs. But Lekan does point out that Seifert’s intentions were not simply reactionary or romantic, but a synthesis of modernist design and social concern similar to the American parkway designs of the 1930s. Lekan expands his discussion of this issue by noting the conflicts over bridges and road connections to show the response of local associations during the Nazi approach to landscape shaping.

In his epilogue, Lekan points to the next version of nature preservation offered by the Rhenish leaders as they fashioned a postwar Heimat identity comprised of regionalist, European, Christian, and anti-Communist elements. In 1957, a comprehensive water management law began the attack on open sewers like the Rhine, and by the 1970s Umweltschutz had replaced Naturschutz in German environmental terminology. For Lekan, continuity existed primarily in the malleability of Heimat and preservation concepts. Regional concepts of nature preservation included the idea of a mosaic of diverse landscapes and again set limits to national approaches just as it had during Nazism. Mostly, the region was imagined in nature, though it sometimes received national and moral overtones. Lekan suggests that comparative studies of Third Reich land-use practices to American projects of the 1930s might yield more results than the repeated assertions that the present-day German ecological groups find their origins in agrarian-romantic sources.[3]
Notes

[1]. Among the authors whose work is challenged are Simon Schama with his simple assertions about forests under Nazism and Anna Bramwell about Walther Darré as "father of the Greens" (p. 13). More thoroughly researched studies by William Rollins, Jonathan Olsen, Raymond Dominick, and Jeffery Herf are given nuanced treatment in the extensive notes.

[2]. Possible corrections for a revised edition: whether Brühl can be termed a "suburb of Cologne" (p. 208); whether the numbers for the population of Cologne in 1945 are missing a zero, as contended in the passage: "in Cologne, only about 20,000 inhabitants remained in the former metropolis of 770,000" (p. 252).

[3] Since the study makes comparisons in the introduction and conclusion with American preservation efforts, I add a personal note: As a member of a local chapter of the Siebengebirge (St. Thomas Village, 1976-77) hiking association, of an Adelaide (Australia, 1983-84) informal hiking club, and of two Carpentras (Provence, France, 1997) rondonée groups, I found the purpose of such diverse clubs much the same. The members sought to appreciate nature (not necessarily to exalt it), to get exercise in nicely isolated, if not preserved, rural environments, and to enjoy good fellowship. The organizations sometimes held meetings and passed lofty resolutions relating to preserving some mythical wilderness, but mostly that rhetoric related to obtaining state support for trips, for marking trails, or publishing newsletters. The personal far outdistanced the political, and except for the German club, the membership tended toward a cosmopolitan makeup (as many foreigners were members as nationals or locals). Ironically, blood and soil themes arose more in Australia than elsewhere, since by the 1980s some Australians began to understand that the aboriginals had provided a better stewardship of the land than the settlement societies, and that the aboriginal ties to the land had been destroyed by British displacement.
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Citation: Dieter K. Buse. Review of Lekan, Thomas M. *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. April, 2005.

URL: https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10447

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