

Learning Dominion over Nature – Forms of internal and external Landnahme in the long 19th century

Abstract

We propose a panel addressing the different forms of semantically embedding ‘nature’ in pedagogical contexts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The overarching conceptual framework is provided by the term *Landnahme* which can be roughly rendered as conquest or colonisation. It was introduced by Rosa Luxemburg to describe the dynamic nature of capital accumulation she observed in her time: She contended that a steady influx of non-capitalist social formations was required to sustain capital accumulation which depended on a continued exchange with those outside formations and could not continue without access to these resources.¹ The resources of the non-capitalist social formations, e.g. non-market modes of production in peasant societies or traditional social structures found in colonised countries, are transformed fundamentally by their capitalist exploitation. The previously non-capitalist outside sphere is subjected to economically valorisation and thus absorbed inside the rapidly expanding capitalist world system of the 19th century.

Klaus Dörre has revived the term *Landnahme* to emphasise that every instance of capitalist development understood as a specific instance of *Landnahme* is accompanied by the instrumentalisation of social relationships: Capitalism cannot develop without permanently acquiring new ‘land’ and motivating social actors to individual, self-interested actions that conform to and support its system. “The expansion of capitalism occurs within the medium of time, both within and outside of national societies but specific to sectors and fields, and it affects different modes of production, social groups, forms of life, and even individual personalities.”² Thus the reproduction of capital depends on non-capitalist labour, non-capitalist social environments and groups – on (female) biological and social reproductive labour, the influx of surplus labour from (semi-)peripheral areas, or the destructive use of natural resources. Conversely, this necessary Other can be progressively integrated into the world market system in a series of expansions that allow it to be absorbed or even become utilised in the active creation of a non-capitalist Other at a higher level.³

We intend to apply these considerations in mutually complementary perspectives on the history of education by reconstructing two contexts respectively of internal and external *Landnahme* with a view to Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries whose ideological construction was supported by pedagogical conceptions of ‘nature’. Each contribution will show how pedagogical programmes, educational practice, and the emergence of new social environments in the context of increasing economic globalisation contributed to both internal and external *Landnahme*. Our ultimate goal is to illustrate how processes of capital accumulation in Germany during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were tied to educational processes and thus how economic actors did not merely emerge under conditions of a capitalist economy, but were educated for that role. The pedagogical ambivalence that this created will be discussed in the context of four thematic fields addressing processes of

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals*. Ein Beitrag zur ökonomischen Erklärung des Imperialismus (1913), in: *Gesammelte Werke* 5, Berlin 1981.

² „Die Ausdehnung des Kapitalismus erfolgt im Medium der Zeit, außerhalb wie innerhalb nationaler Gesellschaften, sektoral, feldspezifisch, und sie erfasst unterschiedliche Produktionsweisen, soziale Gruppen, Lebensformen und selbst die Persönlichkeitsstrukturen.“ Klaus Dörre, *Landnahme und die Grenzen kapitalistischer Dynamik*. Eine Ideenskizze. *Berliner Debatte INITIAL* 22.4 (2011), 56-72.

³ Dörre a.a.O.

Landnahme: The education of segments of both domestic and foreign populations, the remodelling of landscapes and modes of production, and directly of individuals and their bodies in the age of industrial modernity.

It is notable in this context how contemporary notions of 'nature' were recruited to cushion the shock of capitalist transformation not least in the context of education. Pedagogical discourses and programmes of 'nature', purposely designed 'natural' environments and conceptions of the body served to develop compensatory strategies to cope with the alienated (urban) conditions of living and working created by a modern industrial society (Esther Berner). Internally, the artificial creation of idealised spaces of nature (urban parks, suburban and periurban managed landscapes, or touristified environments such as the upper Rhine valley) was to allow the people – each according to their social status – recreational opportunities and boost their national identity (Carola Groppe). Abroad, foreign territories such as the Ottoman Empire (Ingrid Lohmann) or the German colonies (Sylvia Kesper-Biermann) were conceived of as both objects of (semi-)colonial ambitions of political and cultural expansion and its antidote, as spaces of intact nature remote from the alienation of modernity.

Esther Berner (HSU)

Reconquering Nature through "Rhythm": Concepts of Body and Movement at the Turn of the 19th Century

Industrialisation and technological development at work and of the living environment created considerable changes to the perception of the human body at the turn of the 19th century. The recodification of the body in the late 19th century was driven especially by developments in physics, physiology, and psychophysiology, but also in psychology. Anson Rabinbach uses the phrase "human motor"⁴ to describe the dominant model used to interpret the body and its motion. Descriptions and depictions in this vein spread across a wide variety of discursive fields from labour and economics to art, leisure and education. The contribution explores the quest for new – natural – conceptions of body and movement in reaction to this mechanical model.

Critics of capitalism and modern civilisation (Siegfried Kracauer) regarded the aesthetic of human motion evident in the emerging entertainment and leisure industry (chorus line dancing, films, hygienic gymnastics etc.) as analogous to division of labour in capitalist production and subject to similar premises of segmentation and standardisation. Other aspects of their analysis and critique were the sensory overload of modern urban life, the speed of transportation, and their impact on the nervous disposition of the individual (Georg Simmel). A central reference point in this discourse which was strongly influenced by the tenets of contemporary German *Lebensphilosophie*, was a deliberate contrasting of *Takt* (a musical cadence or steady beat) and *Rhythmus* (rhythm, conceived of as natural). This fits seamlessly with a long series of similar dualism posited at the time (*Gemeinschaft* vs. *Gesellschaft*, *Seele* vs. *Geist*, *Kultur* vs. *Zivilisation*, *Rausch* vs. *Wille* etc.). Natural movement following a primal rhythm (*Urrhythmus*) could only be found in children and in primitive cultures, but it could be recovered through educational and therapeutic measures that counteracted the privations of civilisation. The overarching discipline of body and movement that was imposed at the time emerged from films and modern media, but also from a plethora of private schools teaching gymnastics and dance, from musical, theatrical and gymnastic mass performances, but also from broader measures implemented by educational authorities. This discourse-

⁴ Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor. Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity*, Univ. of California Press 1992.

specific body of knowledge and practices of subjectivisation is the focus of this contribution. It aims to 1) expand the theme of body concepts beyond the familiar focus on the Progressive Education movement and *Lebensreform* ideas and 2) to reflect the critique of civilisation that has been interpreted in a variety of ways in the context of an internal *Landnahme*.

Carola Groppe (HSU)

Forming Landscapes, Industrialising Life-Worlds: Environments of Education and Socialisation for Children in Industrial Settings of Imperial Germany

This contribution focuses on the changes in the environments people worked and lived in industrialised Germany after 1890 and their significance for the definition of nature in educating families. Germany had gone from a collection of mostly agrarian territories to a fully industrialised nation state whose cities, factories, pace and noise increasingly dominated the lives of its population. In this context, it will analyse the pedagogical importance of publicly re-organising nature as a space of recreation in opposition to work and urban living. The impact of this reorganisation on education in families within the social structures of imperial Germany will be explored in contrasting examples from bourgeois entrepreneur and working-class backgrounds. The later years of the *Kaiserreich* not only saw the building of numerous municipal parks, they were also the time in which more remote destinations were made accessibly by technologies such as steamships or cable cars and advertised as treasures of German culture. Parents of all social classes agreed that their children should come to know 'nature', be it in the city park, the zoo, or a trip to the Rhine valley. This artificial 'nature' was thus also intended as an environment in which to socialise children and educate families. Children were to be taught to appreciate 'nature' and identify 'German landscapes', but also – especially in the case of working-class children – experience 'nature' as it was integrated into the urban periphery as a playground. Families of all social backgrounds sought to bring up their sons and daughters in a 'natural' environment unspoiled by technology that was diametrically opposed to the reality of their lives. This exemplifies a distant attitude towards technological modernity that cuts across all class boundaries: The modern world might be welcomed as progress, but it needed to be compensated more than actively shaped.

Sylvia Kesper-Biermann (UHH)

Pioneers of Culture Bound for Nature Overseas: The Deutsche Kolonialschule in Witzzenhausen (1898-1944)

The focus of this contribution is the *Deutsche Kolonialschule* in Witzzenhausen. It was founded in 1898 to train farmers in methods to cultivate Germany's colonies. The curriculum required a three-year full-time course on site, and about 650 young men graduated before 1914. Classes continued unchanged after the loss of Germany's colonies, and demand remained high as the school cast itself as a "university of Germandom abroad" and a "colonial educational institution". By the time the school closed for good in 1944, it had produced 2,300 graduates.

The contribution will use the example of the colonial school to explore both a concrete example of external *Landnahme* and the relationship between culture and nature in two respects: First, *Landnahme* here means literal colonisation as the school gave its graduates the theoretical and practical skills needed to farm in the colonies. Thus, we must look into what knowledge and skills were imparted in order to render nature in Germany's 'overseas' economically useful. Secondly, we must explore the relationship between nature and culture, between the civilised and the primitive that is expressed in the curriculum. Germany's colonial farmers were sent overseas not only to bring practical knowledge, but also as 'pioneers

of culture' (*Kulturpioniere*) bringing German culture in its entirety into a distant land they imagined in an untouched natural state.

Ingrid Lohmann (UHH)

The Nature of the Turks and the Soil of Turkey

By the 19th century, the old stereotype of Turks as barbarous hordes from innermost Asia (hence, as the ignoble savage) begins to recede. It is replaced by a greater focus on modernisation and reform efforts in the Ottoman Empire which some commentators even compared to the Prussian liberal reforms of the early 19th century after the defeat to Napoleon. This view extended into the educational establishment. There were also instances of Germans trying to found agrarian settlements – a form of external *Landnahme* that was projected e.g. in Macedonia and Western Anatolia. In contemporary literature on the subject, these projects are justified with the argument that Christians, but not Muslims ('Orientals'), are capable of efficient agriculture and can thus economically valorise "desolate" (*verwahrlost*) lands through productive labour. This is complemented by the idea that certain regions of "Homeric geography" are rightly part of the West and not of 'Turkey' (though the partial belonging of the country to Europe is conceded in some texts).

Educators played a significant role in this transformation. They developed new patterns arguing the legitimacy of subjecting territories of the Ottoman Empire – which was initially almost untouched by capital relationships, but increasingly indebted first to Britain and France, later also to Germany – to a semicolonial regime of resource exploitation. It was their task to justify events with concepts such as 'moral conquest'. German enthusiasm for an expanded economic and educational cooperation with the Ottoman Empire accordingly rose after 1900 with the project of the Baghdad railway – a project in which both German industry and the Deutsche Bank were strongly involved.

The focus of this contribution will be specifically on the share of the educational establishment to this process in the formation of the German Empire. It traces the change in constructions of 'Turkey' and 'Turks' in, among others, the proceedings of the *Versammlung deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner* (Assembly of German Philologists and Educators) and the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (German Oriental Society). At the centre lie the discourse connections between a) classical Greek antiquity as an educational asset, b) the regions of "Homeric geography" as natural and ideational resources, and c) the idea that the territories and this cultural area 'properly' belongs to the West, to Humanism, to Christianity, to Europe, ultimately: to Germany.