

# COMPARISON OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRARIAN LANDSCAPES BASED ON REGIONAL INVENTORIES OF THE SOUTHERN BALTIC REGION AND NORTH FRISIA

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The following article aims to give insights into the possibilities of reviewing and presenting regional geography according to the Leipzig Model, using two regional case studies. These regions are in the southern Baltic region and the (German) south-eastern coast of the North Sea. What is the Leipzig model? Reviews and presentations of regional geography, the results of which have been published since 1957 in the series of volumes entitled “Werte der deutschen Heimat” (Values of the German homeland), can look back on a history of more than 100 years. Originally, this was a project of geography teachers in the state of Saxony, which was also aimed at readers outside the school system after the Second World War. This new direction in terms of readership and the fact that the series occupied a niche market in East Germany for more than three decades has resulted in the “Werte der deutschen Heimat” series being among the best selling regional study publications in German-speaking countries up to the present day. Well in excess of a million copies have been printed of the 71 volumes published to date. Since 2000, the series has been published by the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, IfL) and the Saxony Academy of Sciences in Leipzig under the new name “Landschaften in Deutschland” (Landscapes in Germany). At the IfL the series is seen as an important element in reader-orientated knowledge transfer.

The aim of the editors and authors of this series is to make available to a wider public knowledge about the origin and the present-day development of selected landscapes in Germany. The project is accompanied by an advisory scientific committee. Results of the surveys of the respective landscapes are published in volumes furnished with abundant high-value map and pictorial material, which are addressed equally at experts and a lay public and can also be used for more intensive reading on journeys and excursions.

## Introduction

Well-founded study of regions is based on an interdisciplinary analysis of cultural landscapes, in which the spatial natural, economic and cultural characteristics of a region are portrayed in their origin and in their present-day existence. In this way not only aspects of research but also of knowledge transfer are considered. Selected objects of the landscape within a broad spectrum between natural elements and settlements are described using actual results of research and are recorded according to the relative position of their value for the cultural landscape. Finally on a regional level general statements can be made on natural endowment and the development of the landscape as well as on economic and social structures and their correlation. As a result of the variety of methods of the expert fields of research involved, an intensive exchange takes place between the disciplines, whereby in particular geography as a cross-section phenomena in them which are recorded are orientated to actual spatial developments. The particular concern of the project is to investigate such landscapes, which in the perception of the population are clearly defined historically or by nature. In this way the regional study survey makes an important contribution to the discussion on the value of cultural landscapes and their respective social importance, for example for formation of a regional identity (Brogiato and Porada, 2008).

Although the previous projects focused on Central Germany, i.e., the states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, the series has been an all-German project since German reunification (Fig. 1). This also explains why two projects could be carried out in North Germany during the last few years. Volume 71, *Die Halbinsel Fischland-Darß-Zingst und das Barther Land* (The Fischland-Darß-Zingst Peninsula and the Barth Region) was published in December 2009 (Billwitz and Porada, 2009). Volume 72, *Die Halbinsel*

*Eiderstedt* (The Eiderstedt Peninsula) will be published in a few months' time (Steensen, Panten and Porada, 2012). In this way it has been possible to subject small landscapes in the states of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein to an interdisciplinary cultural landscape analysis parallel to another and it is worth comparing them for several reasons. In the following we will concentrate on the evidence for the development of the agrarian cultural landscape in the Middle Ages and in early modern times. With this study we have albeit chosen only a small section out of the great spectrum of themes which are dealt with in these volumes. However, this appears particularly interesting to us, as in this way a comparison of two very different agrarian landscapes is made possible. The natural preconditions for the development of the cultural landscape as well as the social processes, which took place since the Middle Ages on the (German) south-east coast of the North Sea and the south coast of the Baltic Sea differ from another in very marked form. Even today, the settled landscape, as well as the agrarian structure, shows these differing developments. In a first step we will establish the basic agrarian historical processes on the south Baltic coast over the past 800 years. In a second step the village and field forms of this region will be portrayed in an exemplary way as evidence of these processes, which made out of this region of peasant colonization the central area par excellence of large estates east of the river Elbe. In a third step using the example of the Eiderstedt peninsula (in western Schleswig-Holstein) a completely different development in a coastal region, permanently threatened by the storm floods of the North Sea, will be described. The special house and farmstead forms there up to the present day are testimony to the particular form of agricultural organization which arose, protected by extensive dyke works. For the first two steps approaches from research methods will be used which go back to the

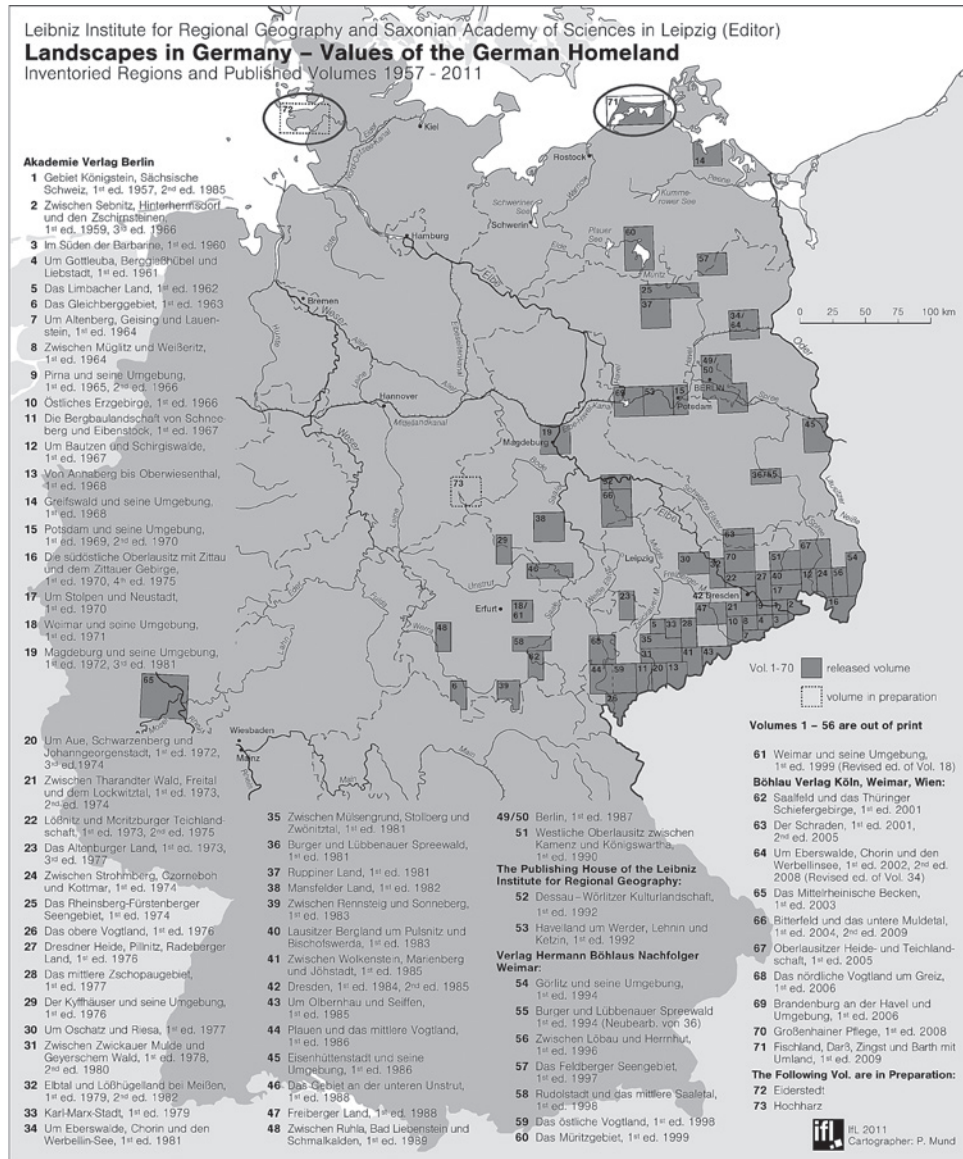


Fig. 1. Overview of the volumes in the series of books “Landschaften in Deutschland — Werte der deutschen Heimat” (Landscapes in Germany — Values of the German homeland) published between 1957 and 2011. Draft: Patricia Mund/Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography Leipzig

Greifswald school of Historical Geography. There in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Fritz Curschmann developed an extensive reconstruction of the cultural landscape

and agrarian historical conditions for earlier periods on the basis of the Swedish Territorial Survey of Pomerania carried out from 1692 to 1709 and also by intensive study of high

and late medieval charters. For the third step the over 40 years' old tradition of research on farm houses in North Frisia and Dithmarschen can be relied upon. In particular attempts to preserve the buildings by a grassroots' movement aimed to set intensive research and its effective presentation in public against the accelerated loss of these witnesses of a cultural landscape.

### Development of agriculture in the southern Baltic region since the High Middle Ages

From the beginning of the 13th century, the German occupation, settlement of land and colonisation triggered a fundamental change in economic and social conditions. The introduction of the Hide Constitution ('Hufenverfassung') based on the Western European pattern went hand in hand with the change in agriculture towards what became almost entirely a grain monoculture, which dominated the southern Baltic region

until the start of the 19th century. Mainly rye, barley and oats were cultivated. Based on the state of the art at that time, farming was really quite intensive. More extensive methods of utilisation dominated only in the coastal regions and on the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula where natural conditions were not as favourable. In most cases the fields were not divided into hides because they were not located in large interconnecting areas and, especially on the peninsula, the extensive grassland areas were used as pastures and meadows. Apart from this, as in all coastal regions, fishing played a significant role well into the 20th century. This means that these villages are better described as fishing rather than farming villages or as combined fishing and farming villages (Bütow, 1998, passim; Benl, 1999, 48 f.). Along with the Hide Constitution came the manorial system or lordship as it is also known, which was to define rural society as a second basic element until the early 19th century. During settlement and

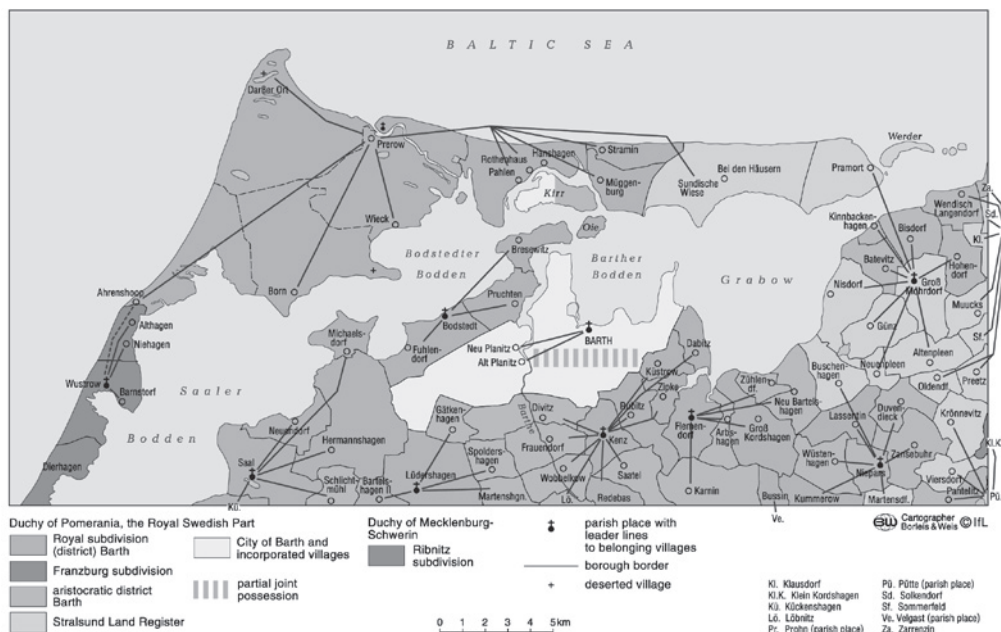


Fig. 2. Administrative (vested rights) and church structure around 1780. Draft: Dirk Schleinert/Borleis & Weis

occupation the land was distributed among the lords, who then acted as locators to promote further colonization and the settlement of farmers. The settlers paid various forms of rent to use the land granted to them by the lords. This could be natural and cash payments as well as work, generally described as socage (Fig. 2). The estate owners were the territorial lords, especially the resident Slav nobility as well as the German nobility who came to the region, but they also included religious institutions and the newly formed municipalities, their institutions and citizens (Benl, 1999, 60 ff., 65 ff.; Schleinert, 2005, 23 f.). A new element in the socio-economic structure evolved with the foundation of towns based on German law. In the area under investigation and the surrounding area this was exclusively based on Lübeck law. The towns took over the function of regional craft and trade centres, although some of them, such as Stralsund, very quickly achieved supra-regional importance. Colonization of the flat land and the foundation of towns and cities are very closely connected in terms of the economy. Apart from intermediary trade with many other goods, the rise of the Hanseatic cities from the late 13th century was especially due to the trade in grain from the newly formed grain-growing regions in their hinterland (Fritze, 1976, 29 ff.). From the 16th century, the manorial system developed in several phases into a form of estate ownership in which the manorial self-sufficient economies (manors, outlying estates) became the decisive economic element that everything else was subordinate to. Favourable factors for this development included the wars in the 17th century with their side effects, decline in population and the destruction of material values (buildings, equipment, cattle). In the 18th century, traditional estate ownership, i.e., managing the estates, was completely shaped by labour services from the dependent population. However, in the second half of the 18th century, especially

on the properties of private land owners there began a phase where farming was discontinued. This almost led to the complete disappearance of peasantry (Schleinert, 2000, 214 f.). In the 19th century, farming villages and domain farms existed only on properties of the sovereign rulers (Grand Dukes of Mecklenburg and Kings of Prussia). In the 19th century, the grain monoculture was supplemented by root crops; initially potatoes, followed by sugar beet, which grow especially well on the heavy soil. When the manorial-peasant conditions ceased and after enclosure, farming was dominated by estates increasingly operating according to capitalist production methods (Schleinert, 2005, 33).

### **Types of fields and villages on the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula and the neighbouring mainland**

From the names of towns and villages it can be seen that the region is made up of former Slav and German settlements from the time of colonization. It can be assumed that the Slav settlements also experienced far-reaching changes during the expansion in the 13th and early 14th centuries. In particular, they were adapted to suit the new types of management (polyculture) and the corresponding cadastral constitution (hide constitution). Without doubt it can be assumed that all places with the German name-roots "dorp/dorf" and "hagen" belong to the newly founded villages that were made arable by clearance or formed by merging small Slav settlements. They are especially found on a broad strip two to almost ten kilometres long south of the Bodden coast (shallow bay coast) on the mainland part of the area under investigation. There one can especially find the loamy soil of the moraine land. It was first possible to farm this heavy but fertile soil with the superior ploughs brought by the German colonists. Agriculture was the main source of revenue in this region. But there were also a number of places without hides.



These were primarily located along the Bodden coast, both on the mainland and on the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula. These were probably areas to which the Slav population, who had preserved their conventional form of economy, retreated. Indeed in fact Slav place names dominate and it can be assumed that there was quite intensive Slav settlement in this area. On the other hand, one also finds place names with “dorp/dorf” and “hagen” that suggest new settlements. This can indicate that farming was carried out without units being divided into hides. But the reason for this would probably have been the poor quality and less fertile soil — generally sand and sandy marsh. Apart from this, in these coastal settlements farming was probably just a secondary source of income in addition to the more widespread fishing (Fig. 3). Some difficulties arise when it comes to determining the specific types of villages and open field systems. While the Swedish land records from 1695/96 give us an early and,

at the same time, extensive range of maps, these maps have only limited value as descriptions of the types of open-field systems. Generally, they show only the different agricultural areas as such but do not describe the internal subdivision. In one farming village of the Barth Subdivision the fields, meadows, pastures and other areas are entered, but the fields belonging to the individual farms cannot be determined. However, there is a more accurate description of what the fields were used for and of the crop rotation. In many cases, the relatively fertile soil of the hinterland allowed a modification of the three-field crop rotation to a form of five-field rotation. These differ from the coastal regions with the poorer sandy soil with no distinct land-use planning. Another reason for the unregulated field systems could be the extensive abandonment of villages in the 17th century and the fact that farming was recommenced only after a long period of abandonment (Curschmann, 1948, *passim*; Wegner, 1968,

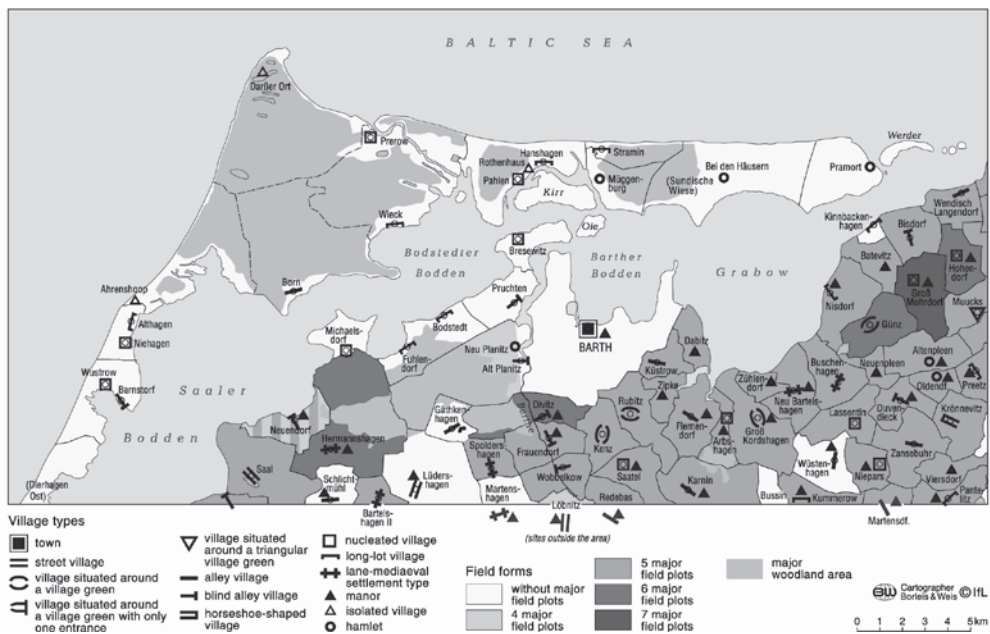


Fig. 3. Forms of village and field distribution around 1700. Draft: Dirk Schleinert/Borleis & Weis

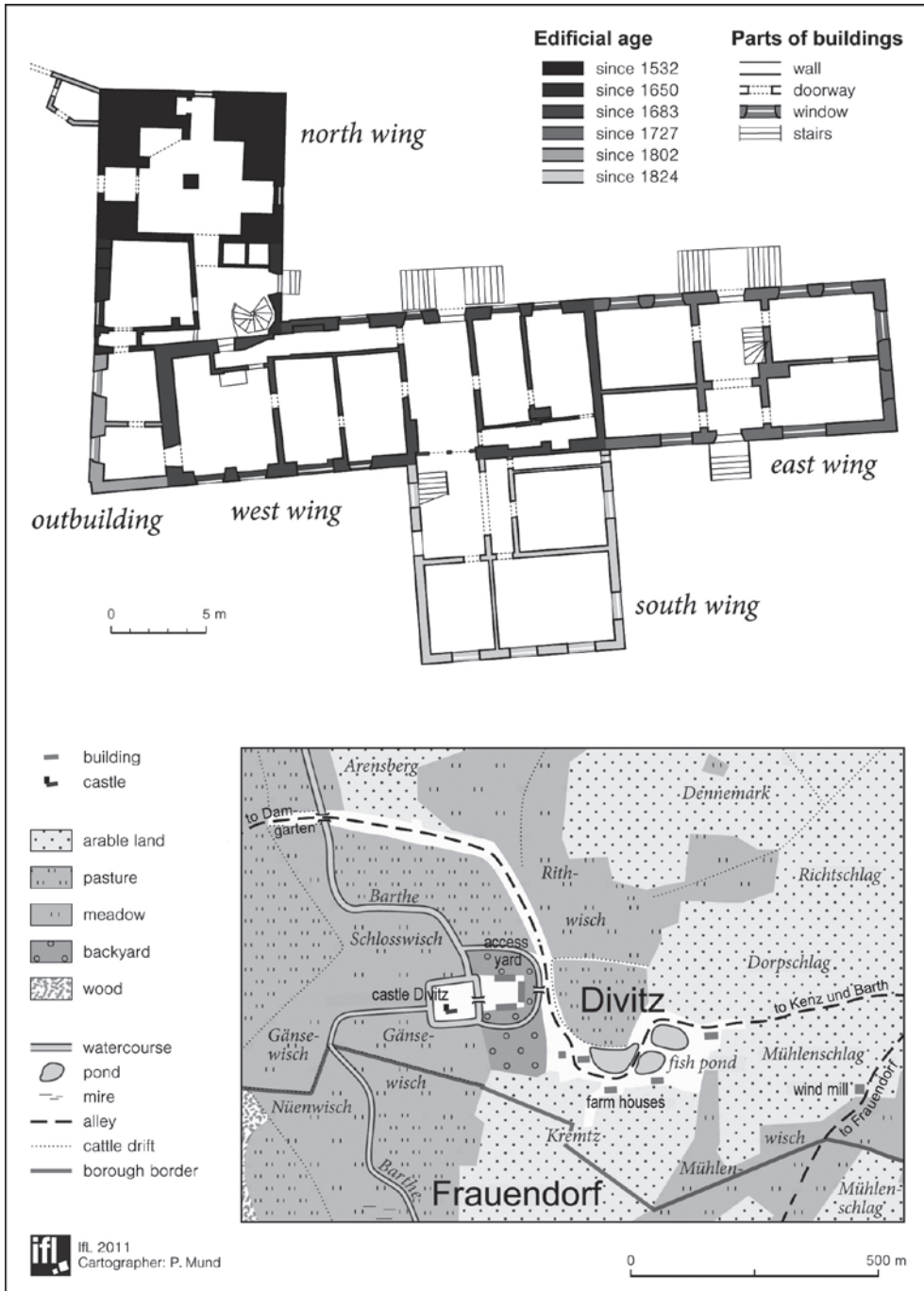


Fig. 4. Building phases of the Divitz manor since the Late Middle Ages and the location of the “Festes Haus” (manorhouse) in the Barth lowland 1696. Draft: Jana Olschewski and Haik Thomas Porada/Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography Leipzig

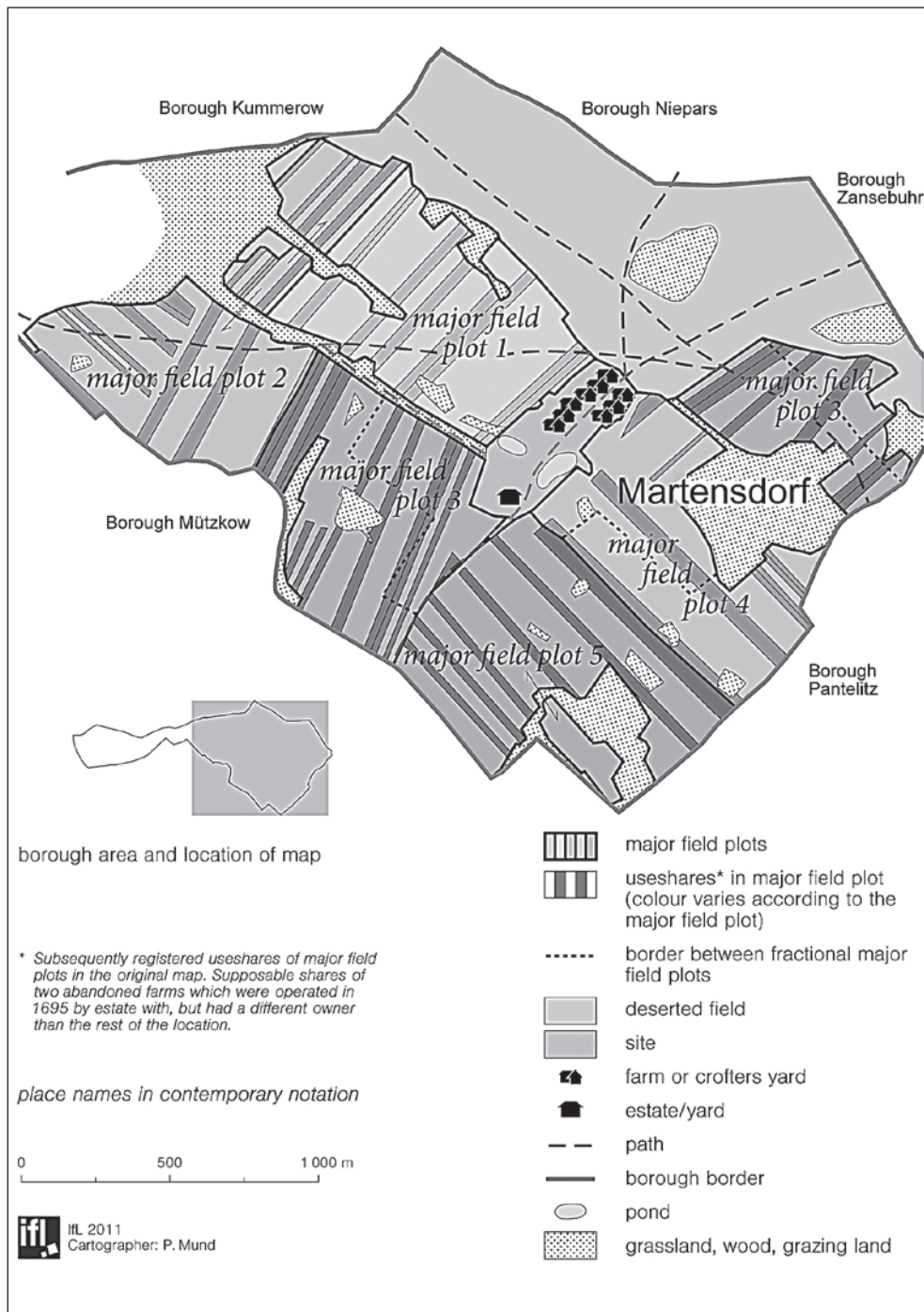


Fig. 5. Field usage system of Martensdorf 1695. Draft: Dirk Schleinert/Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography Leipzig



map in appendix). The types of villages are much more obvious on the maps of the land inventory. But there is also often a lack of obvious features, which does make precise determination difficult (Fig. 4). At that time, medieval settlements were already shaped by two processes. The first is the development of large estates that increased from the middle of the 16th century and the second is the extensive abandonment of villages in the 17th century, some of which can still be seen directly and some of which was also catalysed by the development of the estates. There are few villages without deserted farmsteads or without unused fields, which are either identified directly as deserted fields or which have been used more extensively as pastures or forest. The changes resulting from these two processes have a more serious effect in that here, like everywhere in the northern part of West Pomerania, relatively small village districts with correspondingly small settlements dominate. Most village districts have an area of between 500 and 750 ha. Districts of more than 1000 ha are very rare and are usually in combination with large forests. More common, in fact, are small village districts of less than 500 or even less than 300 ha. The effect of abandonment and the development of large estates on the small settlements with relatively few farmsteads (seldom more than ten), resulting from districts of this size is much more serious for the overall appearance of the village or townscape than it is for larger settlements (Känel, 1971, 69; Bütow, 1998, 120 f.). Because of the special features of the Swedish land inventory that have been described and the general lack of enclosure maps as an additional source of information, it is only possible to describe the types of village and field usage systems here. The body of source material seemed too unfavourable for a more reliable determination. At the end of the 17th century, the fields in the farming villages and townships with several agricultural enterprises had mainly a long narrow

format ('Gewann') (Fig. 5). In a few cases, such as in Martensdorf, there is also evidence of how the shares of the users (peasants and others) were distributed in the fields. The long narrow fields were used in lengthwise and crosswise strips. The sources also mention the term "Ruthen", which was also used as a measure of area. On the other hand, block-type fields dominate in the pure estate villages where the only industry was farming. In most places with farmers and estates, the fields were still in mixed use; in some, however, estate and farm fields were already separated and enclosed (Curschmann, 1948, passim; and 1952, map 3 and 4). One particular feature is found in the "hagen" villages, which are often regarded as exemplary German colonisation villages. While at the end of the 17th century most villages were still recognisable as "Hagen", only very few still have long lots ('Hagenhufen') or evidence that areas were divided up according to the long-lot principle ('Hagenhufenprinzip'), in other words, separate areas for each type of farming (Fig. 6). Much more common are long narrow fields ('Gewann'), as seen in the example of Spoldershagen (Curschmann, 1948, 40 f.; and 1952, Bl. 3; Baumgarten and Bentzien, 1963, 191 ff.). The types of villages and fields changed further through the continued development of estates in the 18th and 19th centuries and the separations/enclosures in the remaining farming villages in the 19th century. The estate villages mostly developed towards the typical format with cottages for the estate workers and the manor house with residential and farm buildings. New settlements evolved in the 19th century as a result of the separations/enclosures and more intensive use of the fields. But as a rule, this was not associated with subdividing the districts; rather the new settlements were regarded as part of the old districts and were often given supplementary names such as 'Ausbau' (extension), 'Heide' (heath) or simply 'Neu' (new). In spite of this, at the end of

the 19th century the settlements in the hinterland of the area under investigation were dominated by the estates (Känel, 1971, 69 f.; Bütow, 1998, 121).

### Types of settlement and rural building on the Eiderstedt peninsula

The fact that the types of settlement and buildings shaping the landscape do not go back very far in history compared to other regions has a lot to do with the development of Eiderstedt itself, as it only became a land-fast peninsula about 450 years ago. The particular conditions needed to settle the

marshland that had been open to the sea for centuries evolved only gradually through the building of dykes and dams. Therefore, the most important phases of the geomorphological changes and human actions to secure land are also mapped in the forms of settlement and in the types of buildings over a long period (Fig. 7).

Although this is a slight simplification, one can distinguish between five types of settlement that shaped the landscape and that are still recognisable: raised embankments/dwelling mounds made by humans ('Warften', terps) of various ages, sizes and types; clustered villages ('Haufendörfer') with

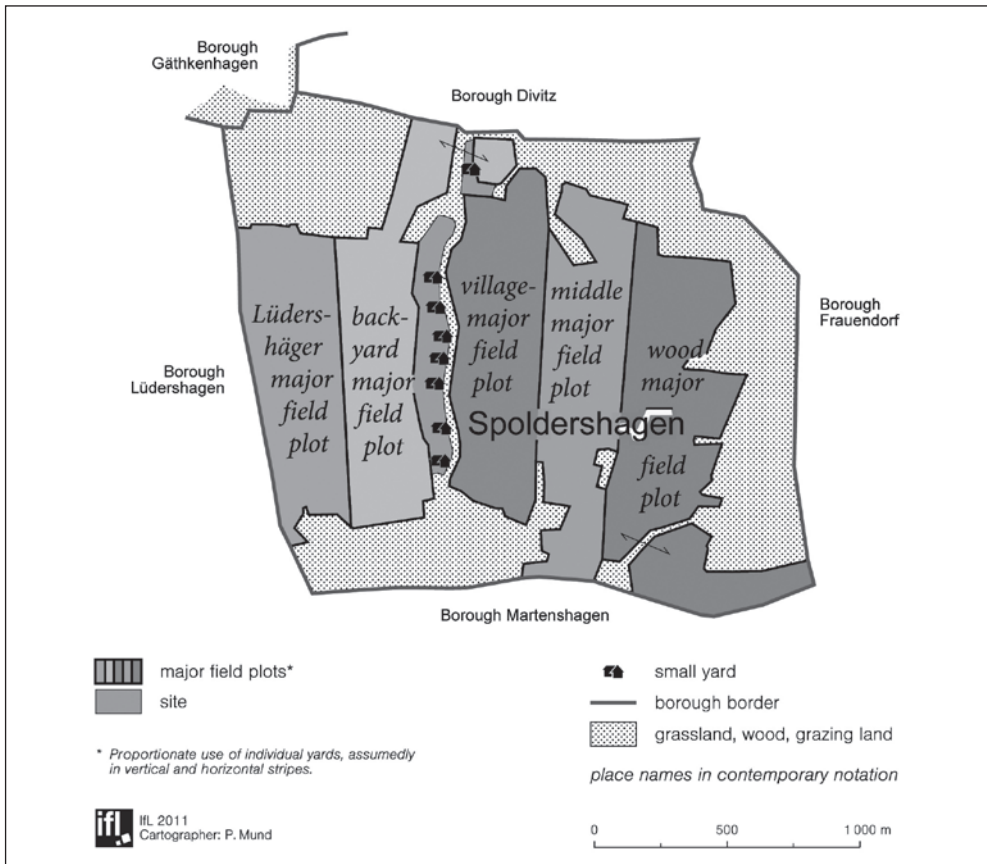


Fig. 6. Field distribution of Spoldershagen 1695. Draft: Dirk Schleinert/Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography Leipzig

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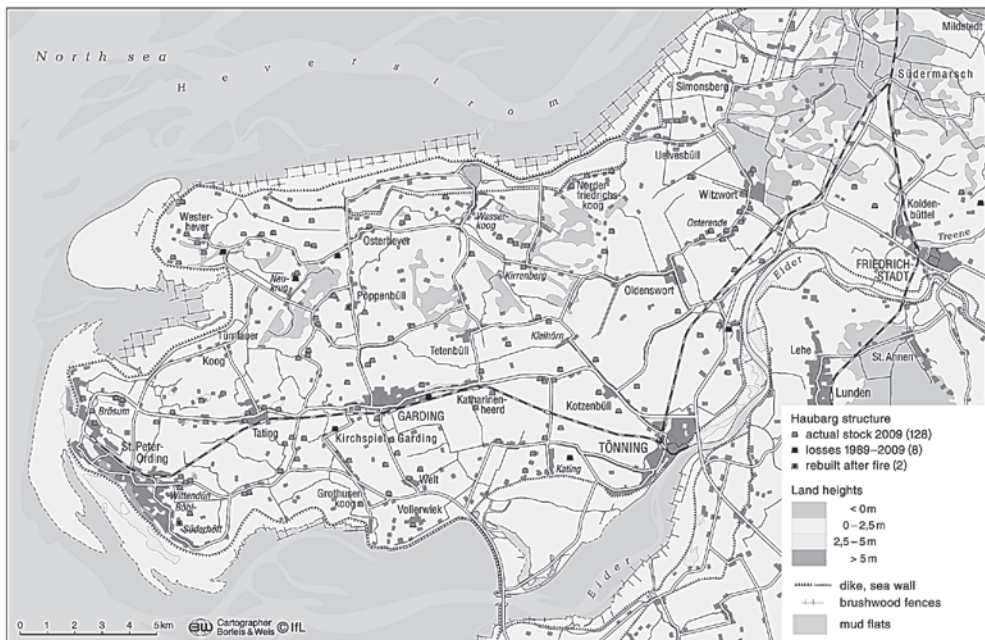
buildings close together on high geest ridges; rows of dwellings on spits, old dikes and along surfaced traffic routes; older and newer single buildings in the landscape on more or less flat ground from land reclamation ('oktrojierte Kōge') initiated by the sovereign rulers since the 17th century (Jessen, 1933) to the systematic land development of the Nazi era and the resettlement programmes after 1960; finally, the new housing estates of the last decades that no longer have any connection with farming.

The older settlements up until the 18th century are most significant for characterizing the Eiderstedt landscape. But the individual villages and polders show some very significant differences, which are mainly due to the condition of the soil, the location and also the age of the settlement. But one thing in particular characterizes the picture of the entire landscape: the prominent role of the 18 churches — even very small and remote

settlements had their own churches in the 12th century. Even after the start of the dyke building (11th or early 12th century) many villages and polders were still separated by tideways and tidal flows. The island-like structure of Eiderstedt made it necessary to have churches within a reasonable distance.

Until the early 20th century, Eiderstedt was one of the wealthiest regions of north western Germany, even though it always suffered from strong economic fluctuations. Since at least the 13th century export of agricultural products, such as livestock, grain, cheese and wool, played a decisive role in founding the at times legendary wealth of big farmers (Tōdt, 1965, 67).

The western spit barriers at today's St. Peter-Ording with their relatively high sand ridges and the spit from there towards east and Katharinenheerd offered early settlers adequate protection against the storm floods (Bantelmann, 1970, *passim*). This



*Fig. 7. Loss of Haubargs in Eiderstedt since 1989 and current number. Draft: Johannes Matthießen/Borleis & Weis*

is why 'freely' structured clustered villages were built on these ridges, from about 1100 grouped around the church which stood at the highest point.

Through finds from excavations archaeologists have been able to show that from the 2nd century AD onwards raised embankments ('Warften') were built on unsheltered grass lands for a settlement protected largely against storm floods. These oldest raised embankments were successively heightened to take account of the slowly rising sea level. In most cases these are very large raised embankments that generally grew from several individual raised embankments. The allocation of these holm raised embankments in the flat marshlands, open towards the sea, with their very narrow and small-sized lots and buildings and a fresh water reservoir in the centre, was frequently decisive for their early embankment. Existing raised embankments often served as base for the dykes which in many cases enclosed an island-like territory in a ringlike manner (Meier, 1991, 14 ff.). Within these very old dykes, a division of allotments has been conserved until today which can be traced back to the tidal creek patterns in the salt meadows of pre-embankment times. The overall settlement structure is characterized by scattered raised embankments of varying sizes, while the eastern part of Eiderstedt features mainly very regular allotment structures and drainage systems as well as settlements mostly in form of rows of dwellings. These can be considered evidence of a systematic development of marshland.

Therefore, a third relatively old form of settlement in Eiderstedt is rows of dwellings. Buildings with more or less even rows of houses evolved where over time many individual raised embankments had been built on a favourable settlement line or where a slight ground elevation offered better protection against flooding (Meier, 1991, 14 f.). A second type of terraced housing evolved due to the increased building of dykes in Eiderstedt

over centuries. When a new sea dyke was built, the dyke body that had acted as the dyke up until that time became the middle dyke. Some of these middle dykes or abandoned dykes in the third row were released after some time for cottages to be built on them, which resulted in long rows of small houses being built on these old dykes for farm workers, fishermen and craftsmen.

The principle of the long houses from the Roman Empire and the centuries following survived in the Frisian long house in terms of construction and distribution: a long narrow house, roughly half of which was used as a stable and the other half as living quarters. The many small houses ('Katen') basically followed the same patterns of construction and division.

But then building took a strange turn in Eiderstedt: At the end of the 16th century Dutch immigrants from West Frisia and North Holland introduced the building principle of the Gulf house. It quickly evolved into the style of a large farmhouse that is typical for the peninsula, the Haubarg. This shape regarded as "traditional" especially in the 18th century has an almost square floor plan covering an area of 600 m<sup>2</sup> and more. The Haubarg was the dwelling house/stable of relatively wealthy farmers. In many cases these houses were furnished opulently (Meiborg, 1977, 45 ff.). Gardens almost as big as parks surrounded the building, the terp was often enclosed by a wide moat. Many farms were surrounded by trees offering protection against the wind. Authors in the 19th century were reminded of English parks (Fischer, 1984).

By the middle of the 19th century, the Haubargs became impractical because of the increasingly intensive pastoral economy (Fig. 8). Many farms were deserted, became dilapidated and were knocked down. More modern buildings, usually with rooms each side of a hallway replaced the typical large Eiderstedt farmhouse. At the start of the



First World War, only about two thirds of the roughly 400 Haubargs still remained, and by 1930 the number had fallen to about 180 (Saeftel, 1965, 63). Today only about 30 are still well maintained, while only very few museums or well renovated Haubargs show what they used to look like inside.

## Summary

Settlement on the Eiderstedt peninsula and on the southern Baltic coast between Stralsund and Rostock was very much influenced by colonization processes in the High Middle Ages. While Frisian occupation

and settlement of land on the west coast of Schleswig-Holstein left sustainable traces in the settlement pattern, on the southern Baltic coast it was Low German settlers who, together with the existing Slav population, developed the land. The cultural landscape of both regions still shows the long-term changes that farming has experienced since the 12th/13th centuries. In Eiderstedt it was mainly dyke building and the resulting polders that shaped the pattern of the fields and meadows to be reclaimed from the sea, while the southern Baltic coast was shaped by extensive deforestation in the Mid-



*Fig. 8. The Haubarg Blumenhof in the western part of the Eiderstedt peninsula was built in 1790. The supporting construction of the “gulfhouse” consists of six wooden pillars (pinewood). The photograph shows the integrated part of living space, which is oriented to the south. The domestic part with the storeroom for the crop in the centre of the house, in the so called Vierkant between the wooden pillars, the threshing floor and the cowbarn points to the north. Photo: Gerd Kühnast, Interessengemeinschaft Baupflege Nordfriesland & Dithmarschen*



dle Ages and the many new long-lot villages ('Hagenhufendörfer'). In the Middle Ages, both regions were characterized by farming settlements but during early modern times the entire East Elbian region changed to become the core region of estate farming, which was accompanied by the spread of serfdom in both Mecklenburg and Pomerania. Similar processes cannot be observed in North Frisia. This is due to different agricultural production conditions and especially the closer vicinity to customers of the agricultural products in Western Europe. From the 16th century, the increasing prosperity in Eiderstedt was evident in the so-called Haubargs, which were a sign of large farming wealth. On the other hand, since the Late Middle Ages, several waves of abandonment can be recognised on the southern Baltic coast. After the Thirty Years' War, the lack of workers increased the trend towards serfdom and led to an extensive change in the settlement pattern. Most farming villages around Barth were turned into estate villages by the 17th century at the latest. Behind these marked agrarian historical differences can also be discerned socially differing processes: Whereas on the one hand in Eiderstedt the nobility and the towns played practically no role and the free peasants were all the more able to administer themselves despite the lordship of the Dukes of Schleswig at the highest level, on the other hand in Mecklenburg and Pomerania the estates (nobles and towns) were able to increase their power extensively. As the power of the territorial ruler became weaker not least as a result of the Peace of Westphalia, the nobility and the towns were able to preserve and indeed even extend their privileges for almost another 200 years. These privileges were at the cost of the peasants who in contrast to Scandinavia and also North Frisia possessed no participation whatsoever in the political power. Despite short phases of settlement in the 20th century, the East Elbian region is characterized by large

operating units from more than 400 years of farming tradition, especially as a result of the collectivization during the Communist period. On the other hand, in Eiderstedt the peasant and large-scale peasant farms have remained almost without interruption since the Middle Ages. This is evident in the settlement pattern to the present day.

Determining such differences in agrarian culture landscapes with the help of text, maps, aerial and satellite images as well as pen and ink drawings and photographs is one of the main tasks of presenting regional geography according to the Leipzig Model. The aim of the editors and authors is not only to reconstruct earlier conditions or to describe settlement-genetic processes, but also to connect these with findings from all fields interested in interdisciplinary regional and cultural studies so that readers may understand complex structures and are thus able to interpret the current appearance of a cultural landscape. In this way geographers along with representatives of other natural and humane sciences have the opportunity to help modern-day people find their identity.

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