

## Landscapes and areas of collective action

**Landkreis Märkisch-Oderland**  
im Land Brandenburg

**Landkreis**

- Informationen
- Ämter & Gemeinden
- Wirtschaft
- Touristische Wege
- Tourismus
- Kunst/Kultur
- Bildung
- Jugend
- Gesundheit und Soziales
- Sport
- Partner

**Landratsamt**

- Landratsamt
- Landrat
- Fachämter
- Fachbereich I
- Fachbereich II
- Fachbereich III
- Abfallentsorgung EMO
- Sprechzeiten
- Standorte
- Statistik

**Kreistag**

- Der Kreistag

**Aktuelles**

- Bekanntmachung Öffentliche Ausschreibung:**
- Bekanntmachung Vorankündigung einer Öffentlichen Ausschreibung**
- Bildungsausschuss**  
Die nächste Sitzung des Bildungsausschusses des Kreistages Märkisch-Oderland findet am 31.03.2011 statt. Hier finden Sie die Einladung.
- Information aus dem LUVG des Landkreises Märkisch-Oderland vom 14.03.2011**  
aktuelle Daten zur Binnenhochwassersituation
- Ratsinformationssystem**  
Am Donnerstag, dem 17.03.2011 kann aus technischen Gründen (Aktualisierung) das Ratsinformationssystem des Kreistages nicht genutzt werden.
- Öffentliche Bekanntmachung**  
Bekanntmachung über die Veröffentlichung des Antrages der Stadt

**Neuigkeiten**

**zensus2011**  
Aktuelles

- Pressemitteilungen
- Amtsblatt
- Stellenausschreibungen

**Häufig nachgefragt**

- Sozialwegweiser
- Kreisrecht
- Formulare
- Volkshochschule
- Medienzentrum
- Erwachsenenbildung
- Abfallentsorgung
- Statistik
- Wahlen
- Straßenverkehrsamt
- Wirtschaftsförderung
- Broschüren und Berichte

**Onlineservice**

- Bauen online
- Wunschkennzeichen
- Kfz-Händlermodul
- Wohngeld
- Elterngeldrechner

**Interessante Links**

- Netzwerk "Gesunde Kinder"
- ARGE MOL/JobCenter
- Wettbewerb „365 Orte im Land der Ideen“
- Familienwegweiser
- Landkreiskarten
- deutscher Wetterdienst
- Badestellenkarte
- aktuelle Oderpegel und

It is a well known result of landscape research that people act and behave in a territorial framework. It is composed by natural structures, by the people they are familiar with, by the language or accent they speak, by traditions they have in common, by architectural styles, by daily routines for work and shopping, by historical experiences and by public authorities.

The question ‘where do I belong?’ is so important for civil societies because within these regions people often are disposed to go beyond what their direct personal or economic interest would suggest. The emphatic version of this concept is a solidly united community.

However, the most interesting way of understanding the German concept “Kulturlandschaft” is to interpret it as a region of collective action.

On the other hand the layout of today’s regions often ignores areas of collective action.

That problem is getting bigger because in the course of the demographic decrease in rural areas there is a tendency to pool different regions that have no historical relationship. In Germany these issues are usually ignored.

Take the counties or administrative districts for example. I live in the “Landkreis Märkisch Oderland”. The Brandenburg districts are based on demographic criteria.

The idea was to combine areas with a high population density near Berlin with peripheral areas that have a decreasing population.

It sounds nice and reasonable but it ignored the older district identity as well as other natural and cultural belongings. There was for example a district called Lebus before World War II, which people still remembered as a rural but self confident county. In the north there had been a district called Oberbarnim, which had a vivid intercommunion with the nearby town Eberswalde.

However, today there is a great difference between the suburban belt ("Speckgürtel") near Berlin and the eastern regions along the border to Poland. And it doesn't seem like the county would ever become an area of collective action again.



Another area of intended collective action is the UNESCO biosphere reservation.

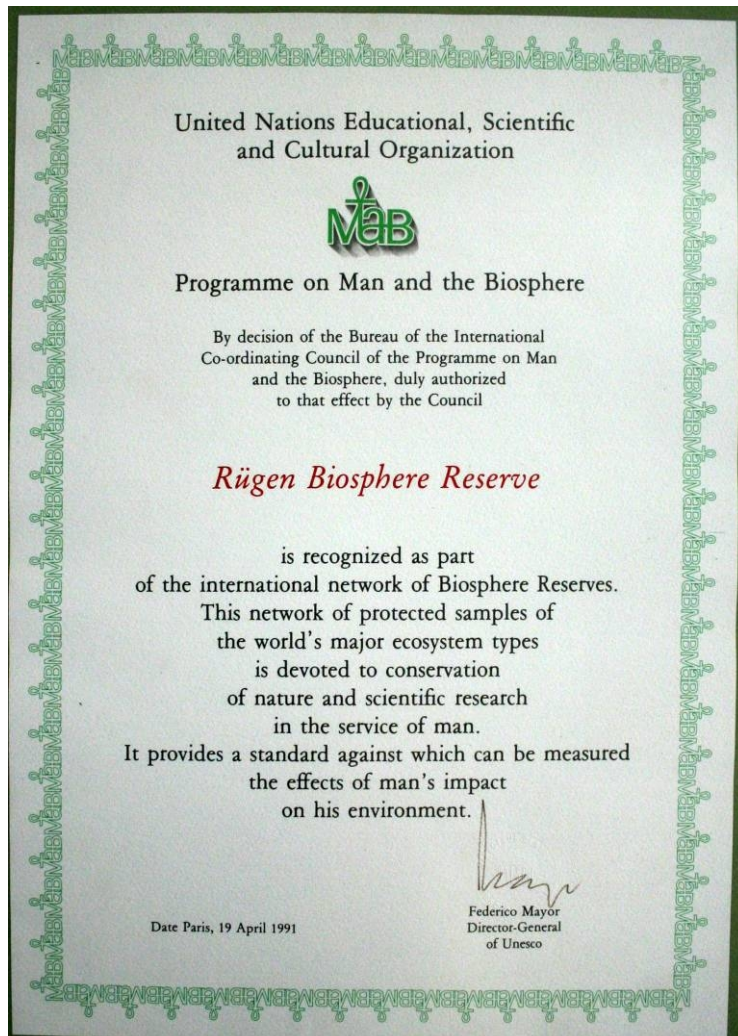
Here you see the administration building of the Schorfheide Chorin Reservation in Angermünde. It is one of the largest in Germany but it wasn't constructed with the considerations of collective action.

The only criteria for the decision - what parts shall belong to the reservation - was the natural configuration and the population structure. So every city was excluded to prevent any conflicts in the economic sense! As a result the office of the reservation now lies outside the reservation because it should be in a town but the town shouldn't be in the area!

The situation with other biosphere reservations is usually similar.

Some are much too small because they were constructed only on the basis of natural characters, so the number of people is much too low and the potential for economical structures is too small.

Others end with the borders of the federal states even though the natural space is larger, and they succeeded in combining the areas only step by step and were able to give them at least a common administration.



And the Biosphere reservation in Southeast Ruegen Island should in any case be expanded over the whole Island but was only constructed on a small and very attractive part of it.

That decision seemed so implausible that the UNESCO committee finally just gave the same status to the whole island. The truth is that there are a lot of political objections against the reservation status for the entire Island and nobody believed it would ever succeed.

However, I think issues of collective action must be considered more intensely in the future, biosphere reservations included.





Another example, again, is the Oderbruch.

That landscape has a very special natural, technical and historical character. It is the largest German river polder and therefore also affected by the effort for drainage and flood management.

The civil society in this landscape shows a high potential for self organization as you can see in the frequent conflicts with the government. Conflicts arise for example over plans for new highways and border crossings, the usage of the land for Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage (CCS) or the state-run financing of drainage. It is only then that the different generations, the ancestral residents and the new residents would unite.

But there is no territorial constitution at all. That leads to periodical collapses of these action groups. So it fails to create continuity in civil engagement even though there are enough people willing to act.

In our own work with this landscape we try to push that question into the public debate.



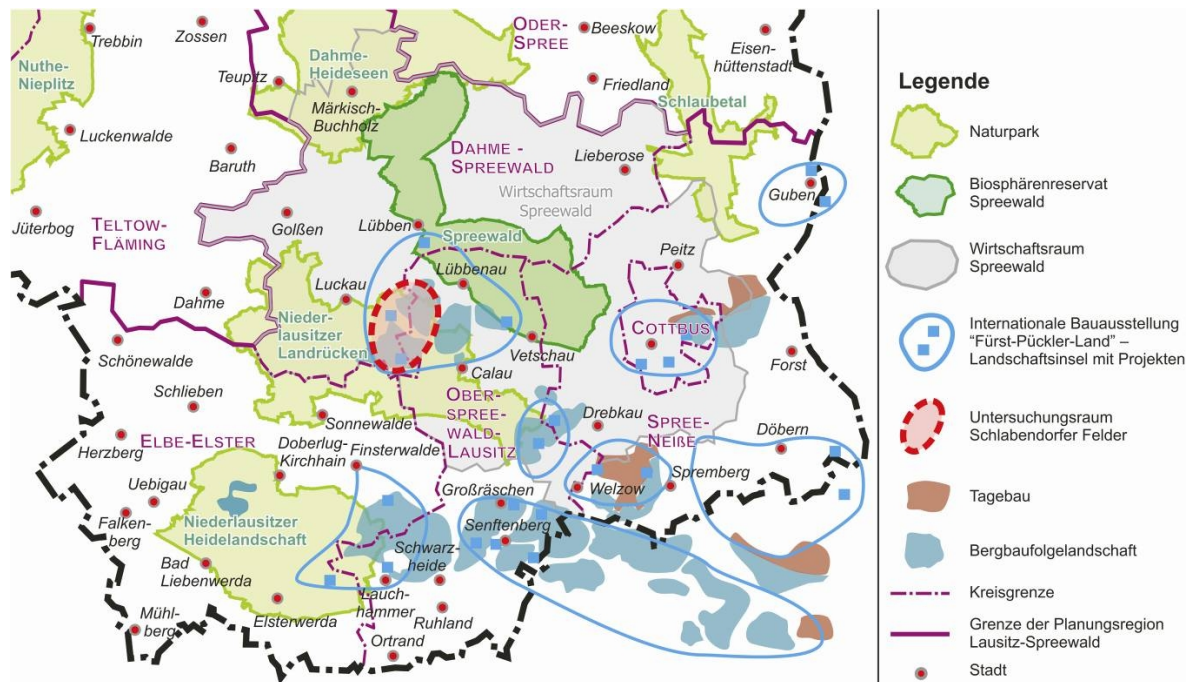
That's why we made a sticker for cars and letter boxes to make this situation known. "The Oderbruch – just like an island." We don't know if it works but there are already some cars driving around with the sticker.

By the way, the political parties and the communal politicians are ignoring this issue even though it would be an opportunity to get rid of many troubles if they solved this problem.

The consideration of areas of collective action could help in finding a balance between local self organization and state response.

The next unavoidable communal district reform will provide an excellent occasion for this – I'm curious if anybody will take the opportunity to.

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My last picture is a map, made by Andreas Röhring and Ludger Gailing from the German Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS) in Erkner.

For them the question of appropriate areas and territories in the sense of the German term “Kulturlandschaft” has a high priority.

So they tried to identify some of the different regional concepts and put them together in one map: natural parks, biosphere reservations, county districts, historical landscapes, post mining landscapes, planning regions, economic areas and so on.

They showed that there are so many frameworks that it is impossible to solve the problem of collective action in all regions at once.

But it should be a much more important issue for the future of parishes, communities, districts, planning regions and landscapes. That’s why it should be established in the political discourses.

It would be interesting for me to know how the situation with areas and territories is in Great Britain.

Is there also such a rapid change in counties and districts?

And have you got any planning paradigm that leads to the regard of the people’s identity in natural and cultural structures?