

Jonathan Finch, Kristine Dyrmann and Mikael Frausing (eds.). *Estate landscapes in northern Europe*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2019, 290 p. ISBN 9788771845198

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In 2015 a network called ENCOUNTER (European Network for Country House and Estate Research) was founded on the initiative of the Danish Manor Museum, Gammel Estrup. This book is the first publication from the network which otherwise has focused on holding international conferences and workshops on the theme. The nine chapters are based on papers presented on those occasions. Six northern European countries are represented, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands and England.

Who is this book written for? Anyone interested in landed estates and landscapes although the different chapters does not tell the entire story of this special phenomena.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold wrote that... “the landscape tells – or rather is – a story”.¹ But whose story? In this volume, the focus is very much on the owner of the landed estate and less on the labourer. Furthermore, focus is on economic-historical aspects and less on e.g. art-historical ideas. As the chapters have not been written originally for this specific volume, they are somewhat disparate meaning that there are texts which are quite general in their description, something one might expect and I would argue is well motivated and fruitful. General overviews like Göran Ulvängs introduction regarding Sweden and parts of Yme Kuipers chapter regarding the Dutch estates are good examples of this. Parts which e.g. analyse and criticize the original sources are, although interesting, aiming above the purpose of the book.

More relevant and interesting is the theoretical discussion about *space* and *place* and the manorial landscape. Venborg Pedersen adds on and discusses the concepts of landscape as a *scene* or an *arena*. Jonathan Finch also talks about the landed estate as something more than acreage, that it needs to be studied from qualitative aspects whereas historians often have focused on quantitative data. Symbolic ideas need to be added claims Finch and he exemplifies by one of the most important ingre-

dients namely shooting. This is also discussed by Kuiper and these discussions could have been deepened as they are vital to know of and about if you want to understand the landscape of an estate.

The chapters can be read on their own entirely which is both an advantage and a disadvantage. One might expect that the content of the chapters would have been more congruent but this is not the case. This means that it is difficult to draw general conclusions on the history of the landed estate in a European perspective and its development through time as facts and figures are not entirely comparable. However, the reader can certainly do a number of comparisons and thereby obtain a general sense of the differences and similarities between the countries as well as the different manorial systems. Two such things, which are especially interesting, are the definitions and etymologies that are brought up in several chapters, both forming a kind of foundation in order to discuss landed estates further. Concepts such as *herregård* (lords farm), *gut*, *gutshof* (manor farm) and other terms are discussed by several of the authors.

To sum up, the content in the different chapters will thus make you aware of the fact that some things are simply quite different and therefore difficult or even not possible to compare. Perhaps the concept of presenting regional examples and stories is the best method of telling the greater story of Estate landscapes in northern Europe. Research on landed estates has in general been a partially neglected area and a lot of research still needs to be done. An important tool to do this and to present the research is the network, perhaps especially the international network. This volume is a good example of how this could be published. Another example is the publication *Avenues in Europe, yesterday, today and tomorrow*.² This book is more narrow and light but still an example of how European networks can, with small resources, publish important research.

For all of us interested in European landscapes, *Estate landscapes in northern Europe* gives a valuable overview written from specific examples. As a researcher, one can only hope that the network continue to thrive and arrange conferences and workshops. A recommendation to

the network is to also use existing conferences to spread the research, for example by arranging sessions at the bi-annual Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape (PECSRL).

Endnotes

1. Ingold, T., "The temporality of landscape", *World Archaeology* 25 (1993), 152–174, 152. Also published as chapter 11 in Ingold, T. *The perception of the environment. Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2000.
2. Brückmann, K. *Avenues in Europe, yesterday, today and tomorrow*. Rostock: Altstadt-Druck, 2015.