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Introduction

In his 1987 essay on the Weimar Republic, which has already become a classic of German historiographical literature, Detlev Peukert defined the term “classical modernity” as the age of the socio-cultural breakthrough of the “modern” way of life from the 1890s to 1933.1 Preceded by the consolidation of the industrial system in Germany up to the 1890s, the age of “classical modernity” was characterized by radical change and development in science, art, urban planning and technology. One of the consequences of all this was a new way of looking at the process of civilization and a critical view of the problems, losses and conflicts, such as the degradation of nature and the environment, which resulted from the rapid modernization of society. While mainstream public opinion and influential groups in German society appraised the industrial und technological manifestations of “progress,” technicians and engineers fought their way into the ranks of traditional academic professions, fostering almost mythical expectations about the capacities of modern technology. Below the surface, society began to exhibit signs of unease and nervous unrest, triggering a whole cluster of reform movements around the turn of the twentieth century.2 The early environmental movement in Germany is located within a wider range of reform movements and critics of civilization, which included distinctly anti-bourgeois groups such as nudists, who challenged Wilhelmine prudery, often in combination with ideas of Social Darwinism and “racial hygiene.” Along with natural healing groups and agrarian settlers they followed, in one way or another, a holistic goal promising the “salvation of civilized man” through a “return to nature.” However, other groups, such as the teetotallers, the so-called Heimatschutz movement and the early environmentalists, were deeply rooted in bourgeois society.3

This study is based on a close look at two organizations of the early German environmental movement: the Landesausschuss für Naturpflege in Bayern (LAN), which was jointly founded in 1905 by several private Munich-based associations and the Bavarian Department of the Interior, and the Bund Naturschutz in Bayern (BN), which was launched in 1913.
as a private initiative to provide the LAN with a popular basis. Both organizations have as yet not been the focus of historical research on the German environmental movement. Except for a few remarks in larger monographs and some short articles, the historiography of the environmental movement has primarily focused on the Staatliche Stelle für Naturdenkmalpflege in Preussen. The latter sets an example of personal and institutional continuity from its foundation in 1906 by Hugo Conwentz to its extension in 1934 under Walter Schoenichen, when it became the sole environmental agency of the Third Reich, to its reestablishment after 1945. The most important interpretation of the German environmental movement was by Walter Schoenichen in his 1954 treatise, in which he emphasized that early environmentalism was first and foremost derived from romantic thought. Schoenichen construed a direct line of development from the “Germanic studies” (germanistische Studien—in the sense of Germanenforschung) of the early nineteenth century to the idea of nature protection at the beginning of the twentieth century and thereby related the environmental movement as a whole to his own distinctly anti-modernist, blood-and-soil outlook.

The profound reorientation of German society in the 1960s and 1970s (including a reorientation of German historiography) led to a new interpretation of nature protection which did not doubt Schoenichen’s basic thesis of German environmentalism’s purely romantic descent, but harshly criticized this concept as backward-looking, antimodern or even proto-fascist. Although this interpretation is not altogether false, as the personal example of Schoenichen shows, it appears to over-emphasize and generalize the antimodernist aspect. Indeed, since the early 1990s German historiography has seen a new approach to the interpretation of critics of civilization, life reformers and environmentalists. New, progressive traits have been discovered in the concepts of these groups and a closer look at the Bavarian organizations concerned with nature protection seems to confirm this trend. Schoenichen’s thesis of a purely romantic outlook does not hold for the two organizations on which this study focuses. The growing concern about the negative effects of industrialization today has led to the demand to treat modernization as a complex and at times ambivalent process and to discard simple dichotomies such as “modern” versus “antimodern” or “reactionary” versus “progressive.” This is not to argue in favor of a positivist idea of historiography, but suggests that the negative effects of modernization and modern ways of living and social reproduction, such as environmental degradation, and criticism of it have to be taken seriously. Indeed, the early environmental movement in Bavaria is best characterized by its attempts—which often ended in failure—to find an alternative, more
sustainable and careful path to modernization in industrially and technologically backward Bavaria.

Dispositions: Environmental and Social Change

The pace of change in the relationship between humankind and its natural environment has accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century at a rate that has made necessary completely new forms of reaction to and mitigation of environmental degradation. Familiarity with the contemporary environmental movement may mean the ideas, arguments and discussions of those early environmentalists sound strange, romantically naive or even reactionary. Therefore a thorough historical analysis cannot but take a look at the material and cultural dispositions, laid down in the course of the nineteenth century, which prefigured the discourse on nature protection around 1900. Along with the material environmental problems resulting from the process of industrialization, the Bavarian concept of nature protection was influenced by an aesthetic perception of nature as picturesque landscape, as well as an idea of Heimat that emphasized the impact of geographical surroundings on the character of the inhabitants of a given area.

That the industrial revolution presented a major turning point in environmental history is undisputed among historians. With hindsight, its main environmental impact seems to have been the switch from solar energy to fossil fuels as the prime source of energy as well as the dynamics of economic growth it unleashed. However, since our concern is early Bavarian environmentalism, we have to ask which particular effects of industrialization were visible around 1900, the approximate starting point of the movement. At the time, industrial pollution in Germany was confined to small “pollution isles” (Verschmutzungsinseln) and industrialization in Bavaria concentrated around the cities of Augsburg, Nuremberg and Munich. Population growth, urbanization, radical changes in agriculture, urban growth and the colonization of the picturesque Bavarian landscape by billboards and industrial architecture were visible manifestations of the industrial age which worried the early environmentalists. Also of great significance was the fact that Germany’s population grew from 20 million in 1800 to 65 million in 1914. The increase in urban population peaked in Western Prussia, but in cities like Munich and Nuremberg the population grew at rates of 209 percent and 266 percent respectively in the years from 1875 to 1910. Munich, for instance, which became the second largest German city in 1890, had increasing difficulties accommodating its population within the old city boundaries. Large-scale urban extension was the consequence, accompanied by rather rudimentary urban planning. As a result, people such as Max Haushofe, an
environmentalist and professor of politics and economics at Munich’s polytechnic, voiced criticism that was widespread in fin-de-siècle Germany: “A certain number and size of cities is surely necessary, because without cities a high level of civilization is not possible in a people. But now there are many cities, and enough of them.”

The rapid population growth was accompanied by a radical reform of agriculture and forestry and a corresponding increase in production, leading to a tangible improvement in living standards by the end of the nineteenth century. The reforms meant the end of traditional forms of farming characterized by the dependence of the rural population on the landowner, the moral economy of the commons, local markets and, on the whole, extensive cultivation of land and forests. Towards the end of the century, new forms of cultivation, such as intensive use of manure and fertilizer, the scientific management of forests, the drainage of swamps, land consolidation, the use of heavy machinery and new management methods, exhausted the soil and radically depleted non-agricultural flora and fauna.

Usually, these changes in land use meant a streamlining of landscapes and forests which collided with what Nipperdey refers to as the German bourgeoisie’s “predominantly aesthetic and sentimental relationship to nature,” a relationship that arose under the influence of romanticism and as compensation for the dominance of scientific and economic perspectives which viewed the natural environment merely as an exploit-able resource. The result was an irreconcilable ideological split; on the one hand there was a pseudo-religious sublimation of nature, while on the other hand there was a completely rational, mechanistic and scientific view of the environment that relegated the romantic view to the sphere of private life.

The “invention” of the sublime and romantic nature was instructed by the works of poets, artists and painters. Indeed, nature became one of the “grand topics” of painting in the nineteenth century. As Wilhelm Riehl put it, the painter’s “eye for the landscape, which evolved from a focus on the individual object to a perspective on the whole,” provided the early environmentalists with an aesthetic approach to the protection of nature, long before geography and ecology thought in terms of ecosystems. The Alps stand as an example for the topos of wild and untamed nature, thereby typifying this aesthetic attitude.

However, only a few years after small groups of artists and aristocratic travelers had discovered the “sensations” of the Alps, a new phenomenon, tourism, set in. The “democratization of traveling” brought huge groups of tourists into the regions renowned for their natural beauty and generated a whole new branch of the economy, accompanied by massive hotels, souvenir shops, railways, log cabins, cable railways,
and hiking paths on the mountain ridges, tourist and hiking clubs and travel literature with enormous circulation.\textsuperscript{24} Within a few years, Alpine nature had not only been transformed into “the well-known cliché of the beauty of nature,”\textsuperscript{25} but its appearance had also been changed by mass tourism. The Bavarian Alps saw a similar development to that which the Western Alpine region had experienced a few decades earlier. While the region south of Munich was still a virtual no-man’s land around 1850 (it still took almost 24 hours to travel from Munich into the Alps), by 1900, as Max Haushofer notes, it had become city’s front yard for weekend tourists:

The railway lines that lead to Alpine lakes such as the Ammersee and Würmsee, the Kochelsee, or the Schliersee, and to the Inn Valley not only give the well-off classes the possibility of undertaking day trips to the attractive mountain landscape, but also allow the petty bourgeoisie and the working class to take part in this aristocratic joy; long trains carry thousands of Munich’s inhabitants into the Alps on Sundays and holidays.\textsuperscript{26}

During the hundred years from the romantic period to the turn of the twentieth century, people’s experience of, and attitudes toward, nature had undergone fundamental changes. Nature as a cultural image and construction had become ever more present in ever broader circles of society. It became a major aspect of the cultural formation of society and it was associated with a particular aesthetic notion. Indeed, in some respects we may talk of a democratization of nature which provided the starting point for the movement to protect nature and the environment from degradation.

Directly related to the concept of nature is the idea of \textit{Heimat}. This term has generated much lively discussion and several different definitions.\textsuperscript{27} Most authors emphasize the geographical and anthropological notions of the term, the specific relation of the individual to their natural and social environment. According to Rolf Petri, the \textit{Heimat} idea had its greatest impact in the century between 1850 and 1950 and can therefore be regarded as a direct reaction to the process of industrialization.\textsuperscript{28} One of its earliest and most lucid proponents was the writer and historian Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1823–1897), who laid down his program of a conservative modernization of German society in his \textit{Natural History of the German People}\textsuperscript{29} (\textit{Naturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes}). Acknowledging the end of the stable social order of the ancien régime and the new geographical and social mobility demanded by the emerging industrial system, Riehl intended

to reintegrate and stabilize those members of the community and society who have become socially ‘homeless’ (heimatlos), and to redraw the lines of those
forms of community that have been blurred in the current age of transformation.\textsuperscript{30}

Important for the history of nature protection is Riehl’s belief that his project of a new, conservative social order could only be achieved if Germany’s environment was protected in its natural form. For Riehl, nature, and forests in particular, were the source of the reinvigoration of the “German people’s soul,” (the Volkscharakter).\textsuperscript{31} In Riehl’s worldview, the idea of the nation is transformed into the experience of everyday life by the Heimat idea—here, the abstract nation becomes tangible for individual perception.\textsuperscript{32} Furthermore, the concept of Heimat is filled with content by connecting it to the natural environment. Thus nature becomes a distinctly political and conservative term.

This paper will now turn to the motivation, arguments and general outlook of the early Bavarian environmentalists, as well as to how they organized themselves. Their actions were prefigured by the basic cultural and material conditions of Wilhelmine Germany summarized above. However, it was their direct experience that determined the organizational form and the modes of argumentation of the early Bavarian environmental movement.

### Organizing Environmental Protection

The first decade of the twentieth century saw the foundation of a number of genuine nature protection organizations, that is, organizations that solely concerned themselves with the protection and conservation of the natural environment or parts of it.\textsuperscript{33} They were organized either as small state agencies or private associations. The most influential of the former was the Prussian Staatliche Stelle für Naturdenkmalpflege, founded in 1906 and led by Hugo Conwentz (1855–1922), a professor of botany and the director of a natural history museum. Conwentz developed a unique concept of nature protection, Naturdenkmalpflege, a term best translated as the “conservation of natural monuments.” By 1914 most German states had followed Conwentz’s example and set up state agencies for nature protection. However, hardly any of them maintained Conwentz’s original notion of Naturdenkmalpflege.\textsuperscript{34} Toward the end of the Kaiserreich several private associations, such as the Verein Naturschutzpark, started to spread the idea of nature protection.\textsuperscript{35} Those who joined this quest were also conscious of being part of an international community. As the Bavarian environmentalist, Gottfried Eigner, noted in 1907, “the movement for nature protection comprises the whole civilized world.”\textsuperscript{36}

In Bavaria, organized nature protection began in 1902, when Gabriel von Seidl, a well-known architect and influential member of Munich’s art
circle, founded the Isar Valley Society, or, to use its full cumbersome title, “The Association for the Conservation of the Beautiful Landscape around Munich, with Special Emphasis on the Isar Valley” (Verein zur Erhaltung der landschaftlichen Schönheiten in der Umgebung Münchens, besonders des Isartales/Isartalverein). The Society was concerned with the conservation of the upper Isar Valley as a recreation area for the urban population of Munich—a distinctly modern idea in times of rapid and unplanned urban expansion. Although the association was deeply rooted in the urban bourgeoisie, it criticized well-off Munich citizens who barred access to the slopes of the Isar Valley by fencing in their country houses. While the association had some success in buying suitable areas along the river and achieved a number of communal regulations on building in green areas, it was not able to keep the river free or stop the construction of hydroelectric plants.

When the Bavarian State Committee for the Care for Nature, or, to use its German acronym, LAN, was constituted on October 14, 1905, it became the first administrative body for environmental protection in Germany. Its organizational form, as well as the general direction of nature protection in Bavaria, was the outcome of a series of difficult negotiations between three main interest groups: the representatives of the Bavarian administration, a number of private associations (art associations, scientific societies, hiking clubs) and business interest groups. Naturally, these groups all had different opinions on nature protection. In January 1904 the Munich section of the German Alpine Society, together with about eighty other private associations, presented a petition in which they requested the Bavarian Department of the Interior to “enact suitable regulations” for the protection of natural monuments “of special aesthetic, historical, prehistoric or scientific importance, the conservation of which is of public interest.” The idea was to put natural monuments on a level with historic ones and to develop a new law to regulate natural monuments on private property. The latter was to create an inventory and, if necessary, enable the expropriation of land and compensation for the landowner. In the course of the negotiations, the private environmentalists had to postpone the idea of a legal solution, as the administration was not willing to go that far. At the request of the LAN in 1908, a new police penal code created the possibility of enacting regulations for the protection of endangered species at a local level. Although the Weimar Constitution of 1919 (Art. 150 No. 1) included the protection of natural monuments, the 1908 Act was to remain the sole legal basis in Bavaria until 1935, when a national law for nature protection was enacted by the Nazi government. The administrations before and after World War I feared such a law could burden governments with huge costs resulting
from the need to compensate private landowners affected by expropriations.\textsuperscript{44}

The second, though minor, stakeholder in the negotiations on how to organize nature protection was the VDI (German Society of Engineers), one of the most influential lobbying groups for technological and industrial development at the time. When rumors spread that a new institution for nature protection was to be established early in 1905, the VDI turned to the Department of the Interior and demanded a say in the negotiations, mainly because it feared the obstruction of plans for the hydroelectric power plant at the Walchensee:

\textit{We have to fear that the rational exploitation of waterpower, which especially in Bavaria is so \textit{extraordinarily} important for industry and the cities, may be obstructed if laws for the protection of natural monuments are enacted without consulting technical engineers. Indeed, technical engineers are able to create the means to combine the wishes of the friends of nature with indispensable technological and economic needs.}\textsuperscript{45}

The wording of this short quotation, the juxtaposition of the utopian “wishes” of idealist “friends of nature” and the rational expertise of “technical engineers” as well as the “indispensable technological and economic needs” demonstrates a line of argumentation which has confronted environmental movements for as long as they have existed. From the LAN’s perspective, it foreshadowed conflicts that would require new and multi-dimensional arguments and a different form of organization. The administration approved the idea and invited the engineers to join the LAN so that the latter would not “be taken in by endless projects and instead focus on the realistic ones.”\textsuperscript{46} It is hard to estimate the impact of the VDI on the work of the LAN, but within the institutional body it was certainly outnumbered by the representatives of the idea of genuine nature protection.

Almost a year after administrative action on the problem of nature protection had been requested, the Bavarian government reacted. Having originally relied on Conwentz’s concept of small-scale protection of single objects, the Department of the Interior presented a new concept at an interdepartmental meeting which was summarized as \textit{Naturpflege}. \textit{Naturpflege} meant the protection of those “formations of nature the conservation of which serves an extraordinary and non-material interest of the public” and in comparison to which “economic interests would have to take second place.” Public interest meant in this case “scientific and aesthetic interest.”\textsuperscript{47} Despite protests from State Department officials who recognized that \textit{Naturpflege} might go beyond what Conwentz and the Prussian administration were planning, as well as those who voiced concerns about high costs in the case that nature protection would not be
restricted to single natural monuments, the plans were adopted. The Department of the Interior had also developed a plan to set up a semi-official institution in the form of a committee consisting of representatives of private associations. The idea was to establish a “lobby group” for nature protection as a counterweight to the strong industrial lobbies. The “sole object of the committee,” the department suggested, “would be to assert the importance of nature protection.”

Such suggestions indicate a “modern” concept of procedural politics. They demonstrate the erosion of the nineteenth-century idea of the unbiased and independent civil servant “solely representing the commonwealth.” Policy issues became a matter of fierce bargaining between powerful and highly integrated interest groups. The idea of a semi-official committee was welcomed by the associations selected for membership. In their eyes it presented a proper way to influence politics and policies through a direct link to the government. Indeed, political decisions in Bavaria around 1900 were still negotiated among a small, homogeneous upper class with an elitist, urban, liberal and anti-clerical outlook. It was a class that consisted of high-ranking members of the civil service, big business, large landowners, the aristocracy and the upper middle classes. Many of the early environmentalists, such as Gabriel von Seidl, were part of this influential circle. An analysis of the committee’s membership between 1906 and 1930 shows that it was drawn almost entirely from the nation’s bureaucratic and cultural elite. Seventy-four percent of the members were either high-ranking civil servants or carried the title of professor; another 8 percent had other academic titles or military ranks; 6 percent were teachers and 7 percent were artists or writers.

The power and prestige of the liberal bureaucratic elites in Bavaria began to fade toward the end of the Kaiserreich, a process which continued during the Weimar Republic era. At the same time, Bavarian environmentalists slowly began to emancipate themselves from the administration. Although the government had not opposed the idea of nature protection, it was not willing to give it free rein. At a time when all branches of the administration were faced with the massive expansion of their responsibilities brought on by industrialization and social change, the LAN represented an attempt to transfer environmental responsibility to civil society, although in such a way that it could still be easily controlled.

Protecting Nature

Over time, however, environmentalists questioned the government’s commitment to Naturpflege and the boundaries within which they could operate. In its constitutional session in October 1905 the LAN had de-
fined its responsibilities to include: providing authorities with expert advice in order to protect natural areas which were of extraordinary, non-material interest to the Bavarian public; promoting a public sense for Naturpflege; “lobbying authorities to save individual natural areas or objects”; and “coordinating all attempts at nature protection in the country.”

The Department of the Interior had mandated that local authorities consult and cooperate with the LAN, which could then boast that “the institutions for Naturpflege are acknowledged as the official experts in questions of nature protection.” By 1913 the LAN had 127 subcommittees and 2330 stewards for nature protection at the district and local level. It had published three programmatic volumes, distributed by the administration, which circulated among teachers, priests and magistrates all over Bavaria.

Considerable success concerning the protection of plants and small natural objects added positive value to the balance sheet; forty protected areas for endangered plants had been erected by 1915, plus a number of so-called alpine gardens and natural monuments. Furthermore, 73 species of plants were under local legal protection by 1912.

However, the crucial question proved to be an issue of a very different nature. Already in 1905, the public became aware of plans to construct an enormous hydroelectric plant in the Alpine region south of Munich. The idea was to exploit the natural difference in height between two adjacent lakes by guiding huge amounts of water through several pipelines from the upper lake, the Walchensee, to the lower lake, the Kochelsee, where turbines were supposed to generate electricity for a state that had hitherto been dependent on coal from the Prussian Ruhrgebiet. Although the Bund Heimatschutz had tried to portray the issue as a matter of principle, the LAN and the Isar Valley Society, which had jointly taken up the issue, never intended to obstruct the whole project. Advocates and opponents of the project mainly argued about questions of detail: How many meters could the water level of the lake be lowered without irreversibly harming the scenic landscape? How much water could be diverted from the River Isar without provoking ecological effects to the detriment of nature, residents and local businesses, such as farming or commercial rafting? How would tourism at the Walchensee and Bad Tölz be affected? Indeed, was there a sufficient market for all the energy that would be generated by the plant?

From the beginning the project was euphorically hailed by businessmen, the media and politicians, and the position of the environmentalists seemed rather hopeless. However, when the construction unit of the Department of the Interior published their plans, which envisaged lowering the water level of the Walchensee by some sixteen meters and diverting large parts of the Isar and another Alpine river, the environ-
mentalists began to mount the barricades. The Isar Valley Society tried to mobilize public opinion through the media and by contacting the residents of the affected area, in addition to submitting a petition to the Bavarian House of Representatives. The LAN tried to persuade the Department of the Interior to adopt a compromise plan that would have generated less energy while sparing the region from most of the detrimental effects of the project. The issue came onto parliament’s agenda in 1908, 1910 and 1912, and the environmentalists had some success. For instance, the original plans of the Department of the Interior were discarded and the House called for a public competition of engineers that was “to take into account the demands to preserve the beautiful Walchensee landscape.” Nevertheless, the House authorized funding for the project in 1910. Although planning came to a temporary halt in 1912, the environmentalists in the LAN were disillusioned. The fact that they had succeeded in forcing environmentalism into a discussion that had initially been strictly confined to the logic of technological and economic progress was a valuable achievement. On the other hand, environmentalists had been the target of harsh criticism from the media and in parliamentary debate. They also had to acknowledge that the Department of the Interior was not willing to change its plans, despite a number of pleas from the LAN. In the end, after 20 years of struggle, the plant was completed in 1924 in a slightly altered form. Many of the detrimental effects the environmentalists had warned against, such as dry and eroding river banks, lowered ground water, problematic fish stocks, decreasing iodine wells in the Tölz spa, not to mention the degraded landscape, did indeed eventuate. However, environmentalists had demonstrated their open-minded, albeit careful, stance towards technological change.

Gradually, the LAN realized that a semi-official conservation committee with little public involvement was almost completely dependent on the goodwill of the administration. In 1913 it took the first step towards greater independence by creating a private association, the Bund Naturschutz. The organization’s history was marred by the series of crises that characterized the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless, despite its regional focus on the Bavarian Free State, it became the largest association for environmental protection in Germany in the 1920s. The BN stayed close to the LAN, which continued its work until 1935. The original purpose of the association—“to raise the financial means to stop detrimental intrusions into nature and to encourage donations for nature protection”—proved too difficult to fulfil. Conservation work had been almost completely stopped during the war, and scarce financial means were consumed by inflation in 1922/23. By 1922 the heads of the association realized that the real potential of the organization lay in the strength of its membership, which had already reached 3,000 persons.68
The BN’s quarterly newsletter, *Blätter für Naturschutz und Naturpflege*, illustrates the lively public work of the association, which attracted a growing number of people through hiking tours, slide and film shows, lectures on nature protection and even advertisements in newspapers and on the radio. The ambition was to encourage “the masses to enter the association” in order to convert “nature protection into a people’s movement”—an appropriate means to promote nature protection in the age of mass consumption and mass tourism. Having started with two hundred members in 1913, the BN increased its membership to 18,086 at the end of the Weimar Republic and reached a peak of 27,531 in 1939. Elementary school teachers constituted roughly a quarter of the overall membership and enjoyed taking teaching out of schools and into public life. Another quarter consisted of civil servants of every level, followed by clerks, priests and corporate members. The increasing membership has to be regarded as a success, all the more because it was not restricted to urban areas or the few prosperous years of the Weimar Republic. While in 1918 and 1920, 32 percent and 37 percent, respectively, of the BN’s members came from Munich, the capital’s share of the membership decreased to 6 percent in 1926 (7 percent in 1933). The BN had increased the popularity of its cause significantly and had spread all over the country.

In its practical work the BN had mixed success. Educating the people about the purpose of nature protection was a major focus. Teachers in particular, but also priests and civil servants, helped multiply the efforts of the BN, knowing this would be effective only in the long run: “We have to establish a long-term educational program for the purpose of nature protection and we have to be content if it at least bears fruit in the form of a more nature-friendly attitude among the next generation.” Another approach focused on the conservation of “untouched” landscapes through founding nature parks, which were to be “protected against the people for the people” for present and future generations. In the words of Karl von Tubeuf, chairman of the BN from 1913 to 1922, they were “to be preserved in their unspoiled quality and power, their virginity and their majestic beauty, for later generations.” Tubeuf’s somewhat naïve language demonstrates the dilemma of this approach—even if those protected areas were generous in size, they presented a kind of museum, an exile or a place of recreation for a small number of visitors. Outside, environmental problems were mounting in the rapidly modernizing Bavarian state. Still, the foundation of the nature park in the Alpine region of the Königssee (128 square miles) was a major success for the young association in 1922. Tubeuf reached his goal by spinning an intriguing web of advocates in the turbulent year 1919. These included the local forest keeper, the LAN, the district governor Gustav von Kahr and the
director of the Chamber of Forests. By 1929, 89 areas of different size had already been put under protection by the administration. The conflict over the expanding railway system in the Alpine region, however, demonstrated that cooperation with the administration was only successful as long as no substantial economic issues were at stake. Another striking example was the almost complete lack of a viable legal basis for nature protection. The focus on the education of the public as well as the organizational form of a private association was therefore a step towards emancipation.

Defining Nature Protection

Nature protection in Bavaria was organized according to the principles of modern procedural politics; it used modern means of mass communication and had a quite sophisticated understanding of mass politics in a modern society. However, this alone does not prove the claim that the Bavarian environmentalists proposed a more careful and sustainable path to modernization rather than simply adhering to an antimodernist, backward-looking perspective. The arguments, motives and approaches of the early environmentalists were shaped by their interpretation of contemporary society during the era of “classical modernity.” In 1900, only a small number of people would have answered the following question by Max Haushofer in the affirmative: “And only now, after the close of the nineteenth century, the civilized world realizes that not only does man need protection from the powers of nature, but conversely, nature also needs protection from the acts of mankind. Is this really so?” Within the small group who answered “yes,” opinions as to what the reasons for this new situation were and how it was to be resolved varied considerably. Ernst Rudorff, professor of music in Berlin and founder of the Bund Heimatschutz, took a radical position. For Rudorff, the degradation of nature was not primarily the effect of the external conditions of the industrial system, but the outcome of a fundamental degradation of moral values in Western civilization. “Modern materialism,” Rudorff lamented, signifies “that true civilization in our society is dying, for in most parts of the nation there is complete indifference to the legacy of our forefathers, and people’s connection with their heritage has faded away altogether.” Therefore the prime purpose of Rudorff’s Heimat protection was “to bring the devastation caused by the modern system of streamlining to a halt at any cost.”

The environmentalists of the LAN took a far less radical position. Nevertheless, they also saw degradation as the result of industrialization and a capitalist economy:
Man destroys, not in senseless rage, but in thoughtless levity or brutal pursuit of profit, countless beauties of nature . . . A dangerous and destructive crusade against nature begins where mankind dwells too densely, where the masses are forced to exploit every inch of the soil, to liquidate every uneven spot that stands against their hasty and busy working and to unfetter the machinery of their restless pursuit without compassion for the tender formations of nature.  

Others shared Haushofer’s analysis, emphasizing either the procedural or individual part of the problem. On the whole, however, they shared neither Rudorff’s widespread pessimistic view of civilization (Kultur-pessimismus) nor his racial agrarianism. Haushofer, for instance, acknowledged the ambivalence of modern mobility and urban life:

With the mobilization [of the masses] the continuity of cultural and political life disappears. The consequences are positive and negative . . . Rigid morals are also followed by rigid vices and the mobilized worker who is not bound to ancient morals takes part more easily in the progress of modern civilization.  

Where Rudorff diagnosed a cultural degradation that was turning “into savagery,” the Bavarian environmentalists instead saw “spreading historical insight and a growing improvement in the cultural judgement of the people” that provided “responsive ground” for their cause. Their attitude to modernity was an ambivalent one. They saw “a conflict of interest between the reasonable activities that focused on the practical and the material needs and the also reasonable non-materials demands of mankind.” The consequence of this could hardly have been radical opposition. Instead, they demanded a thorough assessment of the consequences of the changes to nature, an analysis of costs and benefits, in which non-material values derived from an intact environment played a major role:

The modern movement that demands the appropriate protection of nature even if major projects are concerned, holds, notwithstanding the majority’s opinion of the day, that the great non-material values to be found in the protection and the beauty of nature have to be included in the calculation as major factor. If they are ignored the calculation is false without any doubt.  

The goals of the environmentalists were conciliatory, but they were bound to entail economic costs. Authorities, landowners, businesses and the population had to be convinced of the benefit of nature protection for the “common good.” To this end the environmentalists developed a number of concepts that dealt with the aesthetic, scientific, patriotic, political, ecological and economic value of the environment.

As mentioned above, nineteenth-century bourgeois culture had evolved an aesthetic approach to the natural world that emphasized the
“beauty of nature” and “delight in nature” (Naturgenuss) experienced by contemplating picturesque landscapes. Such landscapes, in Haushofer’s words, “filled the soul with emotions which we need not define or describe, but which still can edify and ennoble us. The thoughts produced while warmly contemplating nature will be the healthiest, most honest and natural we will ever be able to think.” These aesthetic pleasures seemed endangered by an industrial society that depended on ever more intensive modes of production. Gottfried Eigner illustrated similar sentiments in 1908: “Wherever we look at the nature around us, we find the effects of violent human intrusions . . . Picturesque landscapes or single formations of nature which we saw and studied with aesthetic satisfaction or scientific interest only a short while ago have been destroyed or damaged.”

Early environmentalists appealed to these notions when they opposed the closure of riverbanks to the public or the construction of hydroelectric plants. While some historians have accused early environmentalists of obstructing modernization due to “aesthetic scruples,” others criticize their lack of insight into ecology. However, William Rollins has put forward a persuasive new interpretation: Considering the cultural background of the nineteenth century, approaching environmental degradation from an aesthetic point of view was a logical first step.

Almost as important for Bavarian nature protection was a line of argumentation that had initially been proposed by Conwentz. Much like the historic building preservation movement of the 1870s, early environmentalists argued that certain unique parts of nature should be preserved as monuments and objects for scientific research on natural history. Still, Bavarian Naturpflege was not restricted to this single line of argumentation and emphasized its differences with other states: While other states mainly concentrate on the ‘protection of natural monuments,’ Bavaria goes further, as it demands care for nature in general . . . Indeed, it is a basic extension and intensification of nature protection, not only to preserve natural monuments, but also to have the simple and ordinary formations protected and cared for by authorities and private people.

While this concept tried to establish “objective” and “rational” criteria for nature protection, another approach emphasized the patriotic value of nature in the form of Heimat:

Since prehistoric times people have received their truest and most lasting impressions from the landscape. In the soul of the landscape the two most important powers of national life are rooted: love for the homeland (Heimat) and a nation’s imagination . . . The love for the homeland, in turn, is the basis of every state.

Ernst Rudorff advanced similar arguments and turned them into keystones of his totalitarian and antimodernist worldview. The Bavarian
environmental movement, however, used the *Heimat* idea to supplement other, more important approaches and used it in a context that, in general, tried to reconcile nature and modernity. A further, genuinely modern aspect of nature protection emphasized the benefit for social welfare that intact and accessible nature could bring:

> But those millions who year after year are caught between the walls of big cities, working hard, may well ask whether the terrific improvement of traffic will be able to compensate them for the fading beauty of nature. There are enough cities in Germany and elsewhere, where the urban dweller longing for nature even after hours of walking will find nothing but walls and fences, industrial chimneys and warehouses, once in a while a deplorable piece of lawn or a few dusty trees.\(^97\)

Such ideas were behind the Isar Valley Society’s fight for recreation areas.

As soon as the environmentalists had taken a moderate position on modernity they were able to argue in economic terms. Already in 1907 Max Haushofer could formulate positions that today are represented by terms such as “sustainability,” “intergenerational justice” or “ecotourism”:

> Finally there are formations of nature that have to be preserved for economic reasons, against the short-term advantage of individuals and in favor of the future and the common good. To cut an apple tree in autumn will certainly bring apples and wood as well, but in the future no more apples whatsoever. Similar actions which are not as blatantly stupid occur over and over again, enacted by men who only look to the small profit of the moment without thinking about the destruction of future values . . . Often only small amounts of short-sightedness are necessary to liquidate, for little but easy profit, a natural area that could have been the key to coming riches and continuous delight.\(^98\)

The LAN saw tourist associations and tourist regions as natural allies in the fight against the degradation of nature. For instance, it cooperated with the Alpine spa Bad Tölz to mitigate the effects of the Walchensee plant.\(^99\) They insisted that such state projects needed to take into account more than just the economic interests of the state as a whole; they should also factor in the impact on the local economy and the interests of the resident, in this case fishermen, tourist facilities, rafting enterprises and forest owners. Furthermore, it was seen as a matter “of a straight sense of justice”\(^100\) (*einfaches Gerechtigkeitsgefühl*) that access to rivers and lakes was not restricted to the state, but also granted to local communities and cities. The fight against the Walchensee project as a whole had a catalytic effect on Bavarian environmentalism. Starting from a primarily aesthetic concept, environmentalists generated economic and even ecologically based arguments. They warned against detrimental effects on the sur-
rounding vegetation that would result from lower river flow. They attributed an increase in the number of agricultural pests to human intrusions into natural ecosystems, such as destroying the hatching places of birds. They also noted the problems created by air and water pollution. The LAN requested its members give special attention to projects that “may be potentially dangerous for nature because of the way they are operated (either by emitting smoke, gas, bad smells, noise or wastewater, or by directly depleting local resources like wood and causing deforestation).”

By 1914 the LAN had developed a profound and multidimensional program for the protection of nature and its reconciliation with modernity. In the programmatic evolution of the LAN, the First World War represented a step backward. Fortunately, it did not suffer the same fate as the Heimatschutz movement, which gradually drifted to the political far right, taking up the utopian ideology of the Volksgemeinschaft and adopting racist ideas as well as blood-and-soil ideology. It is difficult to locate the BN in the political landscape of the Weimar Republic. Its publications do not provide many direct clues. The environmentalists had already emphasized before 1914 that nature protection was not to be restricted “by party-political considerations or class conflict.” On the whole, they were neither advocates nor aggressive opponents of republicanism; they maintained a close relationship with the conservative Bavarian administration, but increasingly lost faith in politics and its capacity to resolve problems, concentrating instead on their own educational work. The course of the war and its outcome had a twofold effect on the BN’s program. Firstly, war propaganda and a new political landscape in the 1920s resulted in an emphasis on a patriotic and Heimat-centred foundation of nature protection. For example, in 1931, Johann Ruess, secretary of the BN, announced in a radio advertisement: “Whoever joins our cause wants nothing but the protection of our home in a united Germany.”

The argument remained vague and was often tinged with the idea of a “cultural and moral resurrection of the German people” and of a “new strength.” The second effect was equally political. Although people had experienced the destructive power of technology, the German public, including the environmentalists, came to the conclusion that a recovery of Germany’s economic and political position could only be achieved by accelerating the speed and scale of modernization. Under such circumstances, nature protection appeared as a minor issue:

Nowadays nature protection cannot raise its voice and warn against the degradation of nature as in those blessed days of peace. The steadfast necessity to rebuild our fatherland urges German technology to extensive and enormous tasks, the implementation of which will cause important changes and a reshaping
of our local (heimatlich) landscape and which nature protection has to accept silently.\textsuperscript{109}

This postwar desire to rebuild a strong Germany endangered many of the goals of the nature protection movement, and the environmentalists had to try to find ways around it. One way was the focus on patriotism. Another was to search for a university-based scientific foundation for nature protection.\textsuperscript{110} Dealing with large projects and industrial architecture, the BN found a modus vivendi by demanding an “appropriate style and a flawless shaping of works of technology.”\textsuperscript{111} However this merely helped it to save face and became absurd when the BN found itself arguing about the color of grid pylons.\textsuperscript{112}

Surprisingly, initial attempts to amend the foundations of nature protection in the second half of the 1920s came from a direction that had been the starting point of the venture at the turn of the century. It was mainly the landscape painter, Ludwig Bolgiano, chairman of the Isar Valley Society and member of the BN board, who formulated an aesthetic perspective on nature protection that differed from the older static image of the landscape established in the nineteenth century:

\textbf{We will not find the prime purpose of nature protection, in particular the protection of the landscape, in the perpetuation of certain images of nature that have become dear to us, rather we will go and apply our principle to everything the achievements of our time bring with them.}\textsuperscript{113}

Bolgiano criticized popular images and clichés of nature as “kitsch,” arguing that if such images “are brought to mass circulation among the population they spoil or, rather, poison people’s taste and degrade the nature protection movement in the eyes of its opponents.”\textsuperscript{114} At the fourth Day for Nature Protection, which was held in Berlin in 1931, Bolgiano demanded those in favor of nature protection be allowed to participate in all forms of planning that had significant implications for the environment.\textsuperscript{115} Bolgiano’s ideas on landscape protection demonstrate that environmentalists had tried to modernize their program in some respects. On the whole, however, they were unable to continue the promising start of the years before 1914. Paradoxically, this was at least in part the result of the huge success in membership expansion and the extension of the organization all over Bavaria.

When the NSDAP took power in January 1933 the BN was not capable of taking a critical stance on the new regime. During the Weimar Republic it had kept its distance from proponents of a concept of Heimat protection that was based on völkisch ideas of racial hygiene and agrarian retreat. Its overall outlook, however, did not provide a sufficient basis to
view Nazi propaganda critically. Although the BN had “privatized” nature protection since 1913, its relation to the state was still close. In its understanding, the state was not bound to democratic legitimacy. In May 1933 the BN introduced itself to the new Bavarian Secretary of Education, Hans Schemm, a prominent Nazi figure, as an association which intended to “bring to the people the important cultural idea of nature protection as a strong foundation of the love for home and fatherland and to spread the idea in particular among the youth.”

Conclusion

Since 1905 Bavarian environmentalists had been trying to implement their particular understanding of a careful and sustainable path to modernization. Their starting point had been a liberal idea that did not reject social and cultural change as a matter of principle. Environmentalism was therefore able to integrate a variety of ideas, including ecology, economic welfare, recreation and a strong concept of landscape aesthetics. However, the First World War and mounting pressure created by the “crises of the age of classical modernity” stalled the program of nature protection and led to a focus on the patriotic idea of Heimat. In 1933 Bavarian environmentalists were further away from their original goal than ever. Large parts of their program and organization were limited to the belief in Heimat and the state, and both urgently needed renewal.

Notes

This article owes much to the discussions and help I received during my final year at the University of Regensburg and to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Franz J. Bauer. For a more detailed account of this topic, including an analysis of the period from 1933 to 1945, see Richard Hözl, Naturschutz in Bayern von 1905–1945: der Landesausschuss für Naturpflege und der Bund Naturschutz zwischen privater und staatlicher Initiative, Regensburger Digitale Texte zur Geschichte von Kultur und Umwelt Band 1 (2005): http://www.opus-bayern.de/uni-regensburg/volltexte/2005/521/.


9 The leading characters of the Bavarian environmental movement up to 1933 were all born around 1850: e.g. Max Haushofer (1840–1907), Gabriel von Seidl (1848–1913), Eduard von Reuter (1855–1942), Karl von Tukeuf (1862–1941) and Johann Ruess (1869–1942).


15 Max Haushofer, Der kleine Staatsbürger: Ein Wegweiser durchs öffentliche Leben für das deutsche Volk, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1902), 79.

16 Brüggemeier, Tschnorobyl, 51–52.


18 Nipperdey, Deutsche Geschichte, vol. 1, 183.


20 Nipperdey, Deutsche Geschichte, vol. 1, 703; Cornelia Klinger, Flucht, Trotz, Revolte: Die Moderne und ihre ästhetischen Gegenwelten (Munich, 1995), 165.


29 The work was published in four volumes between 1851 and 1869. Riehl’s works had a considerable impact on the early environmental movement. See Ernst Rudorff, Heimatschutz (Leipzig, 1901), 49–51; Gottfried Eigner, Naturpflege in Bayern (Munich, 1908), 60; Hans Welzel, Einführung in die Geschäfte der Naturpflege. Für die bayerischen Organe der Naturpflege (Munich, 1907), 1–2.

30 Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, Land und Leute, 5th ed. (Stuttgart, 1861), 136–137. For the role of the Heimat idea for the building of German nationality, see Petri, “Deutsche Heimat,” 125–127.
The movement for the protection of Heimat had turned away from the protection of nature in the first decade of the twentieth century and concentrated its capacities on local culture as expressed in arts and crafts as well as architecture. See Ina-Maria Greverus, *Auf der Suche nach Heimat* (Munich, 1979), 9; Knaut, “Zurück zur Natur,” 392-94.
BayHSTA MK 14474, protocol of the meeting of administrative departments (December 20, 1904), 2.

“Protocol of the meeting on February 20, 1905,” Blätter für Naturschutz und Naturpflege 13 (1930): 70.


Haushofer, Der Schutz der Natur; Welzel, Geschäfte der Naturpflege; Eigner, Naturpflege. In 1925 a bibliography of nature protection and in 1928 an inventory of protected species were added: Hans Welzel and Johann Ruess, Der Naturschutz im deutschen Schrifttum (Munich, 1925); Hans Welzel, Verzeichnis der in Bayern geschützten Pflanzen und Tiere nach dem Stande vom 1. Januar 1928 (Munich, 1928).


Staatsministerium des Innern, ed., Das Walchensee-Werk, 15.


“Gutachten des Landesausschusses für Naturpflege vom 3. Februar 1907,” in Denkschrift zum Walchenseeprojekt.

Kammer der Abgeordneten, 162nd session (July 11, 1908), 20. In the end the plan that was chosen made no mention of nature protection, as the LAN bitterly complained. “Eingabe des Landesausschusses für Naturpflege an das k. Staatsministerium des Innern am 7. August 1909,” in Denkschrift zum Walchenseeprojekt, 7.

Kammer der Abgeordneten, 356th session (July 21, 1910), 557.


Other environmental organizations lost large numbers of members during World War I and stagnated in the 1920s. The Verein Naturschutzpark, for example, retained only ten thousand members in 1926 of allegedly forty thousand in 1914; see Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn, Die Liebe zur Landschaft, 179.

The data is taken from Blätter für Naturschutz und Naturopflege 1 (1918) -16 (1943).


BayHSTA MK 14474, memorandum on a nature park at lake Königssee (December 9, 1919).

Karl von Tubeuf, “Die Gründung des Naturschutzgebietes am Königssee,” Blätter für Naturschutz und Naturopflege 13 (1930): 1; Bund Naturschutz in Bayern, ed., Das Naturschutzgebiet am Königssee in den Berchtesgadener Alpen (Munich; Berchtesgaden, 1921); BayHSTA MK 14474, letter from the LAN (December 9, 1919) and memorandum on a nature park at lake Königssee (December 9, 1919); BayHSTA MK 14475, letter from the Department of the Interior (May 13, 1920), letter from the LAN and the BN (May 22, 1920) and a letter from the Department of the Interior (February 8, 1922).


Rudorff, Heimatschutz, 8–9.

Ibid., 99.

Haushofer, Der Schutz der Natur, 4.


Max Haushofer, Der Industriebetrieb. Ein Handbuch der Geschäftslehre für technische Beamte, Industrielle, Kaufleute etc. sowie zum Gebrauch an technischen Schulen, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1904), 190; Max Haushofer, Das deutsche Kleingerwerbe in seinem Kampfe gegen die Grossindustrie (Berlin, 1885), 33–35.

BayHSTA MK 14474, petition of the German Alpine Society (January 28, 1904).


Max Haushofer, *Die Landschaft* (Bielefeld; Leipzig, 1903), 25.

Haushofer, *Der Schutz der Natur*, 6. Eigner regards the quarters of the English working class as a positive example in this respect; *Naturpflege*, 62–63. Certainly a utilitarian attitude in the idea of recreation for the working class cannot be fully denied.

Haushofer, *Der Schutz der Natur*, 5.

*Denkschrift zum Walchenseeprojekt*; Schmidt, “Das Schicksal und die Zukunft des Walchensees,” 53, 56. Ernst Rudorff, on the contrary, regarded tourism as “prostitution” of nature that would only lead to the corruption of the rural social order through the influx of urban travelers; Rudorff, *Heimatschutz*, 51–65.


For a differing opinion, see Andersen and Falter, “‘Lebensreform’ and ‘Heimatschutz,’” 299.


Haushofer, *Der Schutz der Natur*, 16.


that asserted the affinity of the Jewish faith for nature protection was well received by the BN; Blätter für Naturschutz und Naturpflege 14 (1931): 170.

Rohkrämer, Eine andere Moderne, 243–270.


Blätter für Naturschutz und Naturpflege 9 (1926): 118.


BayHSTA MK 40501, letter from the BN (May 4, 1933).