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Theodolite

Koppelkamm, Leo

Bavaria was the first precisely surveyed state in Europe. In about 1800, Bavaria, then a newly formed state of 70 territories, urgently needed money. The primary source of income at that time was from taxes on land and buildings. To calculate this, it was necessary to survey the land with tools such as the theodolite. Maps provided an image of the countryside and included natural as well as man-made features. As such, they were used as a basis for all forms of development for the state, private developers, the military, and even for developments in science and technology. Maps of the Anthropocene would show a world dominated by mankind. They can represent interactions and illustrate the consequences of our actions for the planet.



Precision theodolite by Georg von Reichenbach, Inv.-Nr.: 1906/4598
Leo Koppelkamm

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Measuring Bavaria - The theodolite

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Measuring Bavaria

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"Many years ago, when Grandpa was still young, strange things happened in this village."

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Men with big wagons came from the city.

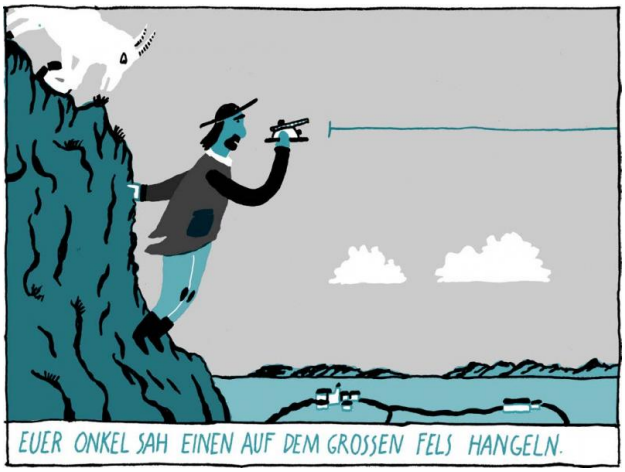
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And built long fences along the fields.
"We are measuring the distance from Föhring to Aufkirchen!"

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Your uncle saw one of them leaning over a cliff.

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In some villages they climbed on the church towers.

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Elsewhere they built wooden towers.

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The priest told us that they are measuring the land in order recalculate the taxes, so we resisted. However, it worked well in the end: our field was smaller than we thought, so we ended up paying less taxes.

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Artist's comment

At first glance, the theodolite seems to be a rather boring instrument for measuring things. But then I came to understand that it is not only a very precise intrument, but also connected to some very interesting political events. After the Napoleonic Wars, King Max ruled the Kingdom of Bavaria, and he aimed to follow the example of the French by building a modern state. He used the Reichenbach theodolite to survey all of Bavaria—the first European country to be surveyed in its entirety.

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Further readings:

- Sources and Literature for the Anthropocene Milestone Comics

Related links:

- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Special exhibition at the Deutsches Museum http://www.deutsches-museum.de/en/exhibitions/special-exhibitions/archive/2015/anthropocene/
- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Virtual exhibition on the Environment & Society Portal https://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6354
- Comic-Anthology, Deutsches Museum Website http://www.deutsches-museum.de/sammlungen/entdecken/comics/

Websites linked in image captions:

- http://www.deutsches-museum.de/sammlungen/meisterwerke/meisterwerke-i/praezisions-theodolit/