

*Transcript: “Living Diversity at the Landhaus”*

*by Susanne B. Unger*

SUSANNE UNGER, NARRATOR

Hello and welcome! My name is Susanne Unger, and I am an anthropologist and podcast contributor reporting on environmental and human–animal issues.

This episode explores how an important topic at LMU, diversity in research, is being practiced by a community of scholars in residence at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. Please join me for an audio field trip to Glonn, Bavaria!

If you have come across the name of Glonn before, it has likely been in the context of the Herrmannsdorfer Landwerkstätten, an ecological farm located roughly 30 kilometers outside of Munich. But did you know that the farm is also home to a group of international fellows at the Rachel Carson Center? Each year, researchers from all over the world and from many academic disciplines are chosen to join the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society to dedicate themselves to a research topic of their choice. In the past, they spent their fellowship at the center, right in the heart of the LMU campus. But, as of this year, fellows complete their residency at the ecofarm near Glonn. A large family home, the so-called Landhaus, has been the home of ten fellows for the past year. The first cohort of fellows arrived in winter 2022 and consisted of ten researchers from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, all at different stages of their careers. They spent the next few months living and working together, sharing meals and kitchen space, going for walks in the countryside together, and learning about animal husbandry and local Bavarian customs along the way.

In the summer of 2022, as part of a university-wide series on diversity and inclusion in research, the Rachel Carson Center organized a day trip to the Landhaus for interested LMU students and researchers. Visitors went on a guided tour of the farm and surrounding areas and also had an opportunity to meet with Landhaus residents. LMU Vice President Dr. Francesca Biagini was among those who visited the Landhaus that day. I spoke to Vice President Biagini about her understanding of diversity, and about how diversity is being lived and practiced at the Landhaus.

UNGER

So, we are at a very particular diversity event here. We are at Gut Herrmannsdorf, where we’ve just toured the grounds, together with Christof Mauch from the Rachel Carson Center. Have today’s impressions given you any fresh ideas or a new perspective on diversity, or is there something that stood out to you at today’s event?

FRANCESCA BIAGINI

Yes. I am really very impressed how diversity in all its aspects is taken into consideration here at Herrmannsdorfer. Nothing is really left to chance, but every aspect is thought [out] carefully, so that you really have for one side the inclusion of diversity and respect for the animals, for the nature. But at the same time, you can also integrate an economics perspective. And so, I’m really amazed and struck by all this combination. I think it’s approaching diversity as an advantage, as a creative advantage, from which we can profit. The Rachel Carson Center is a great example of this diversity and [how] to keep an excellent academic level. So, it’s very

difficult, maybe, to manage diversity and still to achieve this excellence, and Rachel Carson Center is able to do both.

UNGER

What do you think is their secret?

BIAGINI

First of all, it relies for sure on the great personality of Professor Mauch. And also, because people are inspired to work at Rachel Carson Center and this, of course, promotes that people want to understand each other and want to do something for the best. And this is a very nice prerequisite for excellence and for inclusion.

NARRATOR

Upon returning to Munich, I followed up with the director of the center, Prof. Dr. Christof Mauch, to learn what inspired him to create the fellowship program at the Landhaus.

UNGER

So, can you tell us a little bit about how what inspired you to found the fellowship program at Herrmannsdorf, and how it relates to diversity?

CHRISTOF MAUCH

Well, I have to say, first, I was really fascinated when I saw the Landhaus for the first time. I mean, it's a beautiful setting, with a view of the Alps, and the Landhaus, which is a residence, a regular house, where a family used to live, is a place that is surrounded by a farm—this ecofarm. And somehow I thought, this is a setting we are missing at LMU in Munich, in an urban environment. And here, out in the countryside many of our fellows are working on rural issues, are working on sustainability issues. If they could research here and write here, they would have the absolutely ideal environment to write about the environment, about landscapes, transformation of landscapes, etcetera. So, when I saw the Landhaus, I thought this is the ideal place for fellows.

Many of the fellows come from different countries. We've had fellows from many different continents – I think from every continent, really, and they also come from different settings within these continents. Some of them grew up in an extremely rural setting and moved to a big city, and now they have both, they have Munich and the Landhaus. But I think diversity also has two other aspects. One is the diversity of disciplines. So, they come from anthropology, they come from cultural studies, they come from history, they come from ecology. Or some of them are actually writers or outreach fellows. So, we make sure that there is diversity in the setup. Also, we make sure that there is gender diversity, and certainly we really want to have this international diversity—and a diversity of different generations. So, the ones that are now accepted are sometimes retired professors, but now there are also one or two doctoral students or postdocs.

NARRATOR

When I spoke to the fellows about their time in Glonn, many said that their time at the Landhaus was a unique and inspirational experience that allowed them to develop new perspectives on

their research. Some of them also reflected on their time at the Landhaus in the first issue of the Rachel Carson Center's new online journal, *Springs*.

You can find out more information about the fellowship program and the journal on the website of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. Thank you for listening!

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