



© Vineta Film

# Landstück

## Piece of Land

### Volker Koepp

**Producer** Volker Koepp, Rainer Baumert. **Production companies** Vineta Film (Berlin, Germany), Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (Berlin/Potsdam, Germany). **Director** Volker Koepp. **Screenplay** Volker Koepp, Barbara Frankenstein. **Director of photography** Lotta Kilian. **Editor** Christoph Krüger. **Music** Ulrike Haage. **Sound** Andy Michaelis. **Commissioning editor** Rolf Bergmann.

DCP, colour. 122 min. German.

**Premiere** 17 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

The end moraines of the Uckermark have kept Volker Koepp busy for decades. Following the socio-historical *Uckermark*, he devotes himself in *Landstück* even more intensively to conveying the sensory experience of this sparsely populated, ecologically fascinating region between Berlin and the Baltic Sea. The swamp waters rippling in the wind and the swaying treetops and grain fields are like an incitement to focus the gaze on the essence of this swathe of land. When locals and visitors alike rave about the alfalfa fields that prevent desertification but are threatened by conventional farming, when they identify wild herbs at risk of extinction in a small field, taste wild lamb's lettuce, lentil vetch and field violets, the film becomes a hymn to those resisting the industrialisation of agriculture and the destruction of this cultural landscape. Whether the region's 10 percent organic farmers, local beekeepers or the new inhabitants of a 50-year-old prefab who look out of their windows mesmerised – it's a respect for nature that unites these otherwise so different neighbours whom Koepp portrays in his film.

*Christoph Terhechte*

## The greed for land

Forty years ago, I shot the film *Das weite Feld* [the vast field – ed.] in northern Brandenburg. Earlier, I had made my first films with women at the textile factory in Wittstock. The shop floor had no windows; I probably just wanted to go outdoors. I called *Das weite Feld* a landscape film before I started making it. But I soon realised I couldn't make a film without the people who lived in this landscape.

My relationship to the regions north of Berlin goes further back. In the film *Landstück* [piece of land –ed.], I remember the past: enjoying sitting on the harvest wagon in the summer, the hoofs of the grey stepping softly on the summer path that led down to the lake. After working in the fields, the refugee women chatted beside the village water pump. The end of the war was recent, still close.

Harvesting the fields between Berlin and the Baltic Sea. My classmates and I collected potatoes in big baskets. The earth smelled good. Many farm families had fled to the West from the villages. Those who remained worked in the agricultural cooperatives. In the evenings, potato fires burned on the plain.

I saw the painter Caspar David Friedrich's seascapes and landscapes at an early age. I loved these lofty, accessible skies. And so I landed in the Uckermark region between Berlin and Stettin.

'All memory is present,' says Novalis. I shot the film Uckermark fifteen years ago. I already lived in the Uckermark, as well as in Berlin. It's time to look outside my front door and catch up with the neighbours. Many of the old people with stories about the end of the war, life in East Germany and the confusion after the end of communism have died in the meantime; many young people have moved away to find jobs elsewhere.

Today, the global greed for land has reached north-eastern Germany. Since the financial crisis, the state has been selling off large tracts to investors, speculators and agro-industrialists. The new owners don't live here. Wind turbines and monocultures now dominate the view in many places. The harvests increasingly end up in biogas plants. In the name of the energy transition, industrial agriculture is on the march again. The existence of small farmers who have only leased their land is now in danger, as are nature conservation and organic farming.

In the film *Landstück*, I encounter local residents and newcomers: farmers, environmentalists, and villagers, who tell us how they foresee their lives, and about their longings, worries, and visions. They all feel tied to their landscape, which soon will no longer exist.

The transformation has already happened. Some places seem like parts of a huge industrial zone: monocultures, biogas plants, wind turbines, feedlots.

What remains is the summer sky with its wondrous cloud formations. In the Uckermark at this time of year, you can look into an incomparable starry sky, into the universe; and, as the writer Theodor Fontane tells us, the world's upheavals can be seen in every lake in the March of Brandenburg.

Volker Koepp



© Vineta Film

Volker Koepp was born in 1944 in Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland) and grew up in Berlin. After finishing high school, he trained and worked as a machinist. Between 1963 and 1965 he studied at the Dresden University of Technology, later enrolling at the film school in Babelsberg. From 1970 to 1990 Volker Koepp worked as a director at the DEFA studio for documentary film.

Since then, he has been working as a freelance director, writer and producer. He also teaches, both at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg and as a visiting professor at the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf.

## Films

1971: *Schuldner* (11 min.). 1972: *Grüße aus Sarmatien* (16 min.). 1974: *Slatan Dudow* (33 min.). 1975: *Mädchen in Wittstock* (22 min.). 1976: *Das weite Feld* (34 min.). 1978: *Wittstock III* (32 min.). 1982: *In Rheinsberg* (30 min.). 1983: *Alle Tiere sind schon da* (14 min.). 1984: *Leben in Wittstock* (86 min., Berlinale Forum 1985). 1985: *Afghanistan 1362: Erinnerung an eine Reise* (60 min.). 1986: *Die F 96* (135 min.). 1989: *Märkische Ziegel* (32 min.), *Arkona-Rhetra-Vineta* (122 min.). 1990: *Märkische Heide, Märkischer Sand* (58 min.). 1991: *Märkische Gesellschaft mbH* (74 min.). 1992: *Neues in Wittstock* (96 min.). 1993: *Die Wismut* (111 min., Berlinale Neue Deutsche Filme 1994). 1995: *Kalte Heimat* (157 min., Berlinale Forum 1995). 1997: *Wittstock, Wittstock* (118 min., Berlinale Forum 1997). 1999: *Herr Zwilling und Frau Zuckermann* (126 min., Berlinale Forum 1999). 2001: *Kurische Nehrung* (86 min., Berlinale Forum 2001). 2002: *Uckermark* (105 Min., Berlinale Forum 2002). 2004: *Dieses Jahr in Czernowitz* (134 min., Berlinale Forum 2004). 2005: *Pommerland* (88 min.). 2007: *Söhne* (104 min.). 2008: *Memelland* (88 min.). 2009: *Berlin-Stettin* (110 min.). 2011: *Livland* (89 min.). 2013: *In Sarmatien* (122 min.). 2016: *Landstück / Piece of Land*.