



Press Kit:

Rocklines. A journey through Minett, the sea of red rocks

11-28 July 2021

This summer, the [Minett UNESCO Biosphere \(MUB\)](#) and its partners, the [Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning](#), the [Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle \(naturmusée\)](#) and the [Luxembourg Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO](#), in collaboration with the [PRO-SUD](#) municipalities, are introducing the concept of geopoetics to Luxembourg.

Italian author [Davide Sapienza](#) and Luxembourgish scientist [Robert Weis](#), from the National Museum of Natural History, will explore the Minett UNESCO Biosphere from a different angle, by approaching it through a geopoetic project.

According to the Scottish writer and poet Kenneth White, geopoetics is not just another cultural 'variety', nor is it a literary school, nor is it poetry as an intimate art. It is a major movement that concerns the very foundations of man's existence on earth. The links of geopoetics with geography are obvious, but they also exist with geology, biology, and ecology. In fact, geopoetics offers not only an increasingly necessary meeting ground for the poetic reading of the landscape, thought and science, but also between the most diverse disciplines. And it does so by asking the fundamental question: What about life on earth, what about the world?



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A geopoetic narrative for the land of red rocks

The Minett as we know it is the land of red rocks. Its geography is that of a country where red, the colour of iron ore, dominates and permeates throughout the landscape of this region of southern Luxembourg. In people's experience and also in their imagination, Minett has always meant "mining activities" that have marked the national and international "steel landscape" of the 20th century. Yet the Minett, like all landscapes, is inhabited by a spirit of place, the Latin 'Genius Loci', which has never disappeared.

From the Jurassic oceans to the moonscapes left behind by mining activities, Minett's intimate geography seems to be largely unexplored.

Geology is the hidden part of geography, but geography is the truest science of all: we look at a landscape, geography tells us everything in detail. It is our task to interpret it and then translate it into language, human action and practice. And the practice that European geography needs nowadays must be a creative practice: very little theory, a lot of practice.

180 million years ago, it all began in a not so deep sea, on the shores of a large island, in a delta exposed to tidal waves and a tropical climate. Nowadays, the remains of this Jurassic world have surfaced here, in the southernmost region of Luxembourg, on the edge of the Paris Basin, on the border between Luxembourg and France. Iron turned into steel changed this landscape and the history of the people here in the heart of Europe. Today, these remains are the story of the landscape - the new, old landscape that inspired people to create their own destiny. How do we imagine our lives in this new landscape - geographical and human?

There is only one way to find out. We should start walking again, exploring as if we have just landed on the new shores of this ancient basin: waking up, catching a glimpse of the poetic spark that springs from the void left by this industrial past and start writing a new book: Minett, the Land of Red Rocks.



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The idea of the project: Create an interactive travel diary

With this project, the Minett UNESCO Biosphere aims to involve the inhabitants of the region in interdisciplinary experiences to involve as many people as possible in the conservation of natural, industrial and cultural heritage. The project is part of the activation strategy of the [Minett Trail](#), which is being realised and will be operational for [Esch2022 – European Capital of Culture](#).

The authors will travel through the Minett in a van that will stop at different places in the Minett UNESCO Biosphere for consultations with citizens, elected officials, MUB partners and young people. The topics will be: geography, geology and reading of the landscape. The caravan journey will offer walks, aperitifs, visits to unusual places and a camp.

Following the July 2021 trip, a collection of material will be made (texts, photographs, drawings, etc.) with the public, which then will be compiled by Davide Sapienza and Robert Weis. A travel diary of the Minett will be published and offered for sale to share the two authors' experiences with the public.



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Events Open to the Public

Throughout the project: "Rocklines. A journey through Minett, the sea of red rocks", events will be held for the public to get familiar with the concept of geopoetics. In addition, they will provide the opportunity for people to meet Davide Sapienza and Robert Weis, who will be offering their views and perspectives on the Minett.

Due to the health situation all events are by reservation only. These can be made on the homepage of the [Minett UNESCO Biosphere](#).

Wednesday, 14 July (13:30) - Conference and vagabonding in Belval

13:30-14:30: [Conference „Geography in \(e\)motion“](#)

In this conference, Dr Estelle Evrard (Spatial Justice and Territorial Governance) and Dr Lise Landrin (Participatory Action Research and Performative Arts), researchers in geography at the University of Luxembourg, will explore the notion of emotional geography with their current project: REMIX PLACE "Pathways to participation: connecting diverse communities through place". This interdisciplinary project is scheduled to start under the Esch2022 programme. It will explore people's emotional and physical attachment to places.

Davide Sapienza is a self-taught geopoet. In the second part of the seminar, he will explain his vision of geopoetics by explaining how he explores his natural environment and lets his senses guide his artistic direction. In his talk, he will explore the concept of geopoetics and what it has to offer in terms of the emotional connection people experience with their intimate geography.

The conference takes places in the Auditoire 3500 of the Maison du Savoir in Belval.

14:45-17:00: Vagabondage in Belval

Davide Sapienza, accompanied by Thomas Cauvin (Associate Professor of Public History, Centre d'histoire contemporaine et numérique du Luxembourg (C²DH)), will lead a geopoetic walk through the University of Luxembourg. Cauvin is developing a partnership with the Nuit de la Culture in Esch-sur-Alzette for participatory history projects, starting in 2022.



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Sunday, 18 July in Schifflange (11:00) – Hike & Bite

The municipal administration of Schifflange invites you to join the authors in the nature reserve "Lallengerbiërg-Brucherbiërg" for a "Hike & Bite". The start will be near the athletics stadium. A geopoetic walk with Davide Sapienza and Robert Weis will take the participants through the landscape of one of the core areas of the Minett UNESCO Biosphere and will be followed by a brunch with local products.

Geopoetic Camp in Lasauvage (23/07-25/07)

A [geopoetic camp](#) will be held from 23 to 25 July in Lasauvage. During these three days, Davide Sapienza and Robert Weis will introduce participants to the hidden natural and geographical treasures of the Fonds-de-Gras and the "Giele Botter" as well as the rich natural heritage of Esch-sur-Alzette.

Tuesday, 27 July in Kayl (19:30) – Sunset at the Léiffrächen

Starting at 19:30 Davide Sapienza and Robert Weis will lead a group of participants through the nature reserve "Léiffrächen" in Kayl.

This geopoetic walk, of about 90 minutes, will be followed by a discussion about the partaker's first impressions of sunset in the amazing nature of the Minett UNESCO Biosphere.



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Biography of the authors

DAVIDE SAPIENZA (Italy)

Working in the publishing world since 1984, his "first life" has been devoted to music, translation of classic authors, journalism, radio and national television programs. During these years, he also worked extensively with Native American poets such as Lance Henson and John Trudell, who helped him shape a poetic vision related to Mother Earth.

From 1998 onwards, he devoted himself to travel and exploration and, of course, this shaped his particular writing style. He then resurfaced publicly in 2004 with his travelogue, the highly acclaimed "I Diari di Rubha Hunish" (which was the main focus of the Bruce Chatwin Award in the same year). This book, which has become an influential cult-text for many new writers, began a literary cycle sealed in 2019 with "Il Geopoeta. Avventure Nelle Terre Della Percezione".

In 2008, he co-wrote the ground-breaking and thought-provoking documentary on the First World War, with director Enrico Verra: "Scemi di Guerra (The Fools of War)".

In 2014, together with geographer, explorer and author Franco Michieli, Davide completed a three-year fieldwork for ERSAF (the Lombardy Regional Institute for Forests and Agriculture), a long walking study through the central Alps of Valcamonica. This created a 70 km long trail, exploring more than 1,000 km of paths, old and lost roads, to connect the mountain farms of this region. The "[Via Dei Silter](#)" (the name of the path and the geopoetic guide), was named one of the best new paths in Italy and is included in the book "Cammina Italia" (also distributed by IISole24Ore) in 2020.

Davide is currently working on the Bergamo edition of "Corriere della Sera" and a project for [Bodo2024, European Capital of Culture](#).



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ROBERT WEIS (Luxembourg)

Originally from the Minett region, Robert developed a passion for local fossils and rocks at an early age. A former winner of the Young Scientists Competition, he has been working since 2002 at the National Museum of Natural History in Luxembourg as a manager of the palaeontological collections and a researcher specialising in Jurassic marine invertebrates.

He is the author of about thirty scientific publications on the taxonomy and paleogeography of fossil cephalopods. More recently, the promotion and protection of the geological heritage has become one of his priorities. He regularly organises field trips to introduce the public to the landscape and to interpret the hidden secrets of the earth.

Besides his professional commitment, Robert Weis has always been attracted by different forms of artistic expression. With the association "Panoplie" he organised about fifty concerts in Luxembourg and the Greater Region between 2005 and 2010. He is also the founder of the independent label "Pocket Heaven Records" and for many years co-hosted the programme Sentier Sonori on Radio Ara.

Together with the Italian author Davide S. Sapienza, he organised and guided geopoetic and literary walks in the Mullerthal and Luxembourg City. His taste for travel and discovery led him to Japan on several occasions, his notes of these trips are regularly published on the blog: theroutetokyo.com.



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