

Study tour to the post-mining region of Lausitz/Lusatia, State of Brandenburg

Thursday, 30.6.2016

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Local tour operator: Karsten Feucht (transform – Tourism Concepts and Project Management)

Issue 1: Presentation by the tour operator Karsten Feucht

Place: IBA-Studierhaus Lausitzer Seenland e.V. in Großräschen

The region of Lausitz/Lusatia

Lusatia (German: Lausitz) is an historical region in eastern Germany. It stretches from the Polish border in the east to the Elbe valley in the west, today located within the German states of Saxony and Brandenburg. Lusatia comprises two both scenically and historically different parts: a hilly southern "upper" section and a "lower" region. The latter part was the goal of the study tour.

The International Building Exhibition (IBA) Fürst Pückler Land 2000 to 2010

In Germany, international building exhibitions have pushed urban development for more than one hundred years. Traditionally, domestic architecture was in the center of attention. From 1989 to 1999 it was IBA Emscher Park, which was dedicated to the restructuring of an entire region for the first time – in the Ruhr area in western Germany. It has developed a new type of post-mining cultural landscape there. This approach was also addressed by the IBA Fürst Pückler Land from 2000 to 2010 in the south of Brandenburg.



Local tour operator Karsten Feucht during his introduction (photo: R. Vigh/IOER)

Brown coal and post-mining transformation

In Lusatia millions of cubic meters of soil are being moved within the framework of brown coal extraction and redevelopment. Where the energy center of the former GDR once used to be, one can find Europe's largest landscape construction site today. In this region, mountains are being moved and new lakes created. Part of this process of change are industrial buildings, mining equipment, company towns and large-area industrial sites for which new perspectives are to be found. But the main attraction is the new Lusatian Lake District – a group of artificial lakes connected with navigable canals.

Issue 2: The IBA Terraces in Großräschen and the new harbor

Großräschen was a mining town until 1999. Shortly before reunification in 1989/90, around 4,000 of the town's inhabitants were relocated – many of them to the new panel construction development Großräschen-Nord. Today, very few of south Großräschen's buildings remain to tell of the town's mining history. The whole town – including its decayed historic town center – had become bleak and dreary. Today, Großräschen is on the way to a lakeside town. The former open cast mine is filling with water and several tourism projects have been or are just now realized: The IBA terraces, the new harbor and the pier.



Construction area "New Harbour" in Großräschen (photo: R. Vigh/IOER)

Opened in 2004, the IBA Terraces in Großräschen were awarded the Architectural Prize of the federal state of Brandenburg, and received a lot of attention both in specialist circles and from the wider public. All the major architecture magazines reported on this radical structure on the edge of an open cast mine. (source: <http://www.iba-see2010.de/en/projekte/projekt1.html>)

Issue 3: Open cast pit operations in Welzow

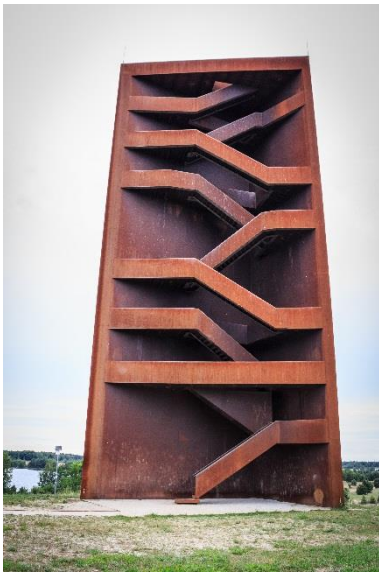
The Welzow-Süd open cast pit lies between Spremberg and Welzow, where huge conveyor bridges and bulldozers raked up the soil and left behind a bizarre moonscape, a monotonous sandy desert with the same recurring patterns. Work began in and around the Welzow-Süd open cast mine in 1959. At the time, there were still about thirty working open cast mines in the Lusatia area – all but four of which were shut down after 1990. Welzow-Süd is one of the remaining mines. It will continue to produce brown coal until at least 2030 and perhaps until 2050. The coal seam here is particularly abundant, but is buried deep – about 80 to 100 meters below the surface (source: <http://www.iba-see2010.de/en/projekte/projekt8.html>).



Open-cast mine "Welzow-Süd" including conveyor bridge (photo: R. Vigh/IOER)

Issue 4: The landmark „Rusty Nail“

To get the opinion to observe the change of the landscape, a viewing tower was erected and opened in 2008 on the Sorno canal between the Lake Sedlitz and the Lake Geierswalde in the heart of the new lake district. Made from rust-colored Corten steel, the Landmark is intentionally reminiscent of the industrial origins and history of the area and of steel mining machinery – while the sculptural staircase is a symbol of human achievement and of the future. From a height of thirty meters, its users can see three lakes and the Schwarze Pumpe, Boxberg and Jänschwalde power plants on the horizon. Since its opening, the Landmark has received widespread attention in specialist circles, among the general population, and from visitors. It has been nicknamed the “Rusty Nail” (source: <http://www.iba-see2010.de/en/projekte/projekt10.html>).



Landmark “Rusty Nail” in the Lusatian Lake District (photo: R. Vigh/IOER)

Issue 5: The Lusatian Lake District including artificial watercourse connections

The Lausitz and Central-German Mining Administration Company (LMBV), owned by the Federal Republic of Germany, was established in 1994. Its focus of activities lies in the rehabilitation and recovery and increasingly also in the reclamation of the areas claimed for lignite mining. With this the foundations were laid for a comprehensive restructuring and recovery of the former mining regions in eastern Germany. Approximately 107,000 hectares of mining land lay originally in LMBV’s area of responsibility (source: LMBV 2009; The company – we change regions).

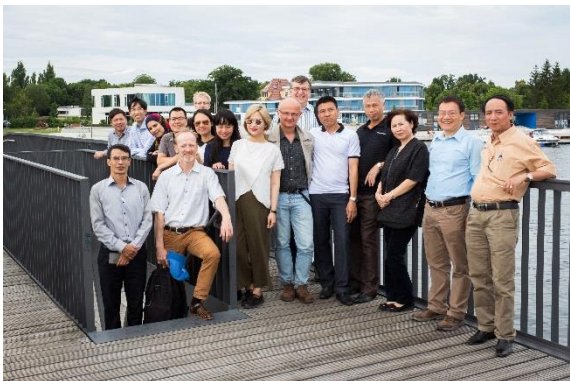
The most prominent recultivation project of the LMBV is the upgrading of watercourse connections between the emerging lakes in the Lusatian and Central German Lake Districts to form navigable canals. The objective here is to create watercourse connections, attractive to tourists that go beyond commercial water-related functions. Thirteen canals are planned for the Lusatian Lake District. Most of them are already finished (source: LMBV 2014; Views).



The Sorno Canal is connecting Lake Sedlitz and Lake Geierswalde (photo: R. Vigh/IOER)

Issue 6: Senftenberg Lake including the new harbor of Senftenberg City

The decision to connect the Lake Senftenberg and the Lake Geierswalde as well as most of the new lakes by canals was followed by the idea that the city of Senftenberg should have its own harbor, to fit the town for its increasing water sports popularity, and to connect it with the lake in architectural and urban planning terms. Based on the completed overall plan, the IBA and the city ran an architectural competition in 2009 to design a new city harbor. The prize-winning design focused on a bowl-shaped quay and a delicate bridge on the lake. The project was realized from 2011 to 2013 and became Senftenbergs new attraction (source: <http://www.iba-see2010.de/en/projekte/projekt12.html>).



The excursion group in the new Senftenberg harbor (photo: R. Vigh/IOER)