

## The World Canals Conference is coming to my HERE in 2022.

I am from here. My HERE as a child growing up in the 1960s in Leipzig's Südvorstadt was the hockey pitch of Aufbau Südwest in Pistorisstraße, now the LSC. The way there was my fixed mile, Arndtstraße, Schleußiger Weg to Rödelstraße, between Germaniabad and Sommerbad Kleinzschocher, through Clara-Zetkin-Park and forests with mysterious names like Beipert or Nonnenholz, along the water over huge bridges, over Pleiße and Elsterflutbett, Scharbockskraut and Märzenbecher. With the mini-bike to my violet spots that defied the powerful scent of wild garlic. All of this mixed with the overpowering foul smells from the Pleiße and Elster to form a kind of childhood companion smell.

The attraction of water has always been great, as great as my awe of the rusty weirs and fear of slipping into the brown broth with its phenolic whitecaps. The idea that you could go there by boat was absurd. It came from old postcards, photo books or from my father, who used to bathe here himself as a child. And from the rowers or the tippy canoes who, admired by me and unperturbed by dirt and danger to life, did their training laps on the Elsterflutbett and Stadtelster.

Cut. The end of the 1980s, the floodplain forest is suffering, the water is still contaminated. One Mark for Espenhain, Pleiße to the light, environmental movement, peaceful revolution.

Cut. 1990 "Stop Cospuden", Ökolöwe star march with 20,000 Leipzigers, moonscapes, exodus. Then "Neue Ufer". A citizens' movement with stakes along the filled-in Pleiße and Elstermühlgraben became a municipal waterway opening programme.

In the mid-1990s, we cycle through the Auwald with a group of Munich friends, the classic - Clarapark, Connewitzer Wehr, Pistorissteg, Neue Linie, Wildpark to Cospuden. Mouths dropped open: you have so much forest? Leipzig is that green? And this will be a lake one day?

Cut. 2022 - my HERE now has over 600,000 inhabitants, and the trend is rising, a city of culture with water as the centre of the Leipzig Neuseenland. People like to live and work by the water. If you can pay for it. People like to rent a boat and paddle around Schleußig and to Lindenau Harbour with astonished guests. Or to Lake Cospuden, through the raft ditch. But shhh! Only within the specified times. Then maybe the kingfisher will show itself. And the floodplain forest is still suffering - or suffering again - from too little water, from a lack of flooding. The Living Luppe and the floodplain forest concept are intended to help counteract this.

Word has spread about this development, this new "unique selling point" of Leipzig and the region. Not only in German universities and colleges, which bring their landscape or regional planning students and university staff here in rows for excursions: Leipzig, alluvial forest, rivers, waterway connections and four evolutionary stages of open-cast mining lakes - Profen, Zwenkau, Störmthal, Cospuden Lakes, topped off by a view of the changing landscape from the Bistumshöhe, an astonished look in the face of an empty Elster reservoir, then a coffee at Pier 1 and in the evening to the Distillery.

No, worldwide too. Inland Waterways International, which indulges in inland waterways and their preservation worldwide, is the sponsor of the World Canals Conference, or WCC for short. Since 1988, when we just collected One Mark for Espenhain here. They found their way to Leipzig around 2010 via the unfinished Saale-Elster Canal. From then on, the

Leipziger Neuseenland was a guest on every agenda of the WCC conferences in Toulouse, Ghent, Inverness or Yangzhou. Due to Corona, the conference planned for 2020 in Leipzig was postponed to 2022. And now it is coming up HERE, for the first time in Germany, and not at Lake Constance or in Hamburg.

Around 100 experts from four continents will be giving presentations. From Vietnam, China, India, Ethiopia, Georgia, Armenia, Poland, Czech Republic, USA, Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Germany, and many more international guests will come. Seven hours of lectures every day and then it's out on field trips - a format that no HYBRID will tolerate. A format that gives us the chance to show our imperfect landscape transformation to the world and to talk about it, to learn, to broaden horizons. About transformation of waterways, of landscapes, of living and working environments, about climate change and health worldwide and HERE. And about the fact that without peaceful coexistence, everything is nothing.

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[www.wccleipzig2022.com](http://www.wccleipzig2022.com)