

**Project Betterfield—Looking back after 10 Years:**

Urban Catalysts and Culture for Shrinking Cities

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**TKK\***

Utopian City Guide



**BETTERFIELD**

The theme of *shrinking cities* has perhaps never been approached with such rigour and imagination as with the massive German think tank and exhibition project IBA Stadtumbau 2010 (IBA Urban Renewal 2010). The project was accomplished between 2002-2010 and its telling motto was “Less is Future”. We took part in this project at the Architecture Department of Helsinki University of Technology in Helsinki, took part in the project in its three last years. With IBA, we worked on the theme of catalytic urban interventions in the fascinating city of Bitterfeld-Wolfen in Saxony-Anhalt region, thinking ways to turn the process of shrinkage of the city into an asset. Helsinki University of Technology became later Aalto University through a merger with two other universities in 2010 and by accident, both Bitterfeld-Wolfen and Aalto University are simultaneous mergers – the city went through the process of an amalgamation of two former cities and three municipalities simultaneously with our contribution to IBA Stadtumbau. In both cases, ten years seems to be about the time, when a collaboration of institutions has turned into genuine unification instead of just neighbours.

With IBA, we used plans for urban interventions for triggering culture and to resist the hovering, negative demographic change, which was at that time facing the Saxony-Anhalt region. IBA 2010 combined together urban renewal projects and participatory processes within the shrinking region in order to turn the tide. We worked in collaboration with IBA and the city, trying to find positivity in downshifting and “slow lifestyle”, but most of all, clues for growing unique attraction and getting on the track of growth again. The outcome of our work was an “utopian travel guide” for the future of the city – “Betterfield” as the city was renamed in our speculative travel book – for the year 2020<sup>1</sup>. This article is a scrutiny on the prophecy of that publication 10 years ago. Was the prognosis correct? What can we learn of the process?

When IBA asked our university to participate in the project of urban renewal in Bitterfeld-Wolfen, they proposed us to help with suitable urbanistic strategies for effectiveness and concentration, with emphasis on urban design. IBA’s concept for Bitterfeld–Wolfen was “Lean City” – implosion turned into fitness, following IBA’s that time focus with shrinking cities. Instead of building up a conventional physical urban design project, we decided to approach this more strategically and to make a persuasive *guide book* to the future Betterfield. The guidebook – as a new form of a *urban catalyst* – demonstrates, in an inevitably risky and brave way, the possibilities in recognising and benefitting local strengths, using existing structures as magnets – perhaps small scale interventions first, some of which could grow into remarkable assets until 2020, we hoped. Our compilation of projects presented in the utopian travel guide book were seen as outcomes of long processes in between 2008 and 2020, where minor developments could make possible more progressive ones later.

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<sup>1</sup> Ahlava, Antti; Harris, Trevor (eds.) (2008). *Betterfield: Utopian City Guide*. The publication was produced with study course tutors Johanna Hyrkäs, Veikko Mäkipaja and Esa Laaksonen and the student groups of Wan Shanshan & Heikki Kosonen, Ville Karhu & Milla Nummikoski, Lauri Eklund & Antti Turkko, Irene Freni & Oliviero Piffaretti, Cecilia Alessandrini & Anna Kivinen, Sinikka Wasastjerna & Tomi Tulamo, Jonna Taegen & Martin Wyss. Layout: Timo Metsälä. Helsinki University of Technology.

Now, in 2021, it is possible to return to the city, to interview locals and to see how much Bitterfeld-Wolfen has changed in ten years and whether the predictive guide book matches the present circumstances. We wanted to see, whether the city has adopted any of the catalytic strategies or initiatives we suggested and whether we even grasped feasible themes. We are also interested in what other development there has taken place in the meantime, telling their story on the possible effect of IBA's programme of a Lean City and Bitterfeld-Wolfen in the context of shrinking cities, changing demographics and *network cities*.

From 2002 to 2010, IBA Stadtumbau was accomplished entirely in the Saxony-Anhalt region, seeking for answers to the population decline in many of the eastern parts of Germany. Saxony-Anhalt's small and medium-sized cities, in particular, wanted to set a new course in urban development in response to the demographic decline – emigration, low birth-rate and ageing population. IBA Stadtumbau was the first IBA to span an entire federal state. Under the direction of Omar Akbar, Rüdiger Schulz (until 2008) and Philipp Oswalt (since 2009), planners and architects joining the IBA Stadtumbau project, experimented with new tools of urban renewal in 19 cities of the region.

When the Germans unified in 1990, Bitterfeld and Wolfen were prone to become left out in optimistic progress, because together they used to be a centre of mining and chemical industries in the former GDR, having disturbed the local ecological landscape. The industry deceased rapidly. Saxony-Anhalt needed a complete reconstruction. Bitterfeld and Wolfen were some of the many municipalities in the former GDR, which faced the problem of shrinking population. The present area of Bitterfeld-Wolfen had the shrinkage of 32% in the number of inhabitants in the period of 1990-2003 and is now roughly 40.000. The reason for this downwards change of population was the post-industrial change following the GDR era. Bitterfeld used to be one of the centres for lignite mining (brown coal), which was burned in GDR's powerplants, producing not only affluence, but also acid rain. After the German unification, environmental standards made this kind of industry impossible. Unemployment ensued in the area and the image of the city became one of an environmental catastrophe. Therefore, during 1990-2002, the city identified a need of change to its image. Attracting new inhabitants and even keeping the present ones required new types of methods and strategies for the development of the place. Our utopian guide book *Betterfield* was one of the tools in the strategic development, a catalyst amongst others intended to turn a collection of shrinking towns into a thriving network city. Through making the guidebook, we wanted to support varying characteristic of the sub-areas and nodes of the area and thought that emphasising and creating attraction for them is vital and benefits the whole region. We thought that a tourist guide book would be a suitable means for manifesting the underlying charm of the local towns, possibly triggering new growth, or at least supporting optimism and shared discussion.

## From Shrinking to “Lean” Cities

The German union of countries had also its negative consequences, as the outflowing wind spread across the former East Germany. Populations shrunk, unemployment grew and the property owners and municipalities didn't have abilities to sustain, bringing especially small businesses, towns and mid-sized cities into challenges of survival. Businesses, industries, suburban housing areas and urban blocks perished in many places. The eastern parts of Germany then had still dignified building heritage, but not enough funding to support the maintenance, until the European Union invested nearly two billion euros to the redevelopment of the area between 2000 and 2010, as well as there appeared additional approx. 200 million euros related to the IBA 2010 projects at the same time.

IBA organisation – Internationale Bauausstellungen – came to join the helping forces for cities not for the first time. It was established already in 1901 as a German visionary researching and consulting organisation in urban development, which has curated, debated, triggered and displayed many sets of new urban concepts and encouraged urban renewal projects in a remarkable scale, attracting and gluing the participants of local urban development projects together. In 2002-2010, IBA did not have its own funding, but made it easier for regional “priority decisions” to access external support programmes. IBA attracted funds from different sources to build up greater value for local collaborative projects. Also in shrinking cities outside Germany, the collaboration between local actors (companies, administrators and inhabitant groups) have strategically been encouraged and curated by experts. This has taken place for example in such shrinking cities as Detroit in Michigan, US, where local manufacturers, universities and the city joined their forces to place the creative fields linked to its manufacturing industry in the centre of the strategy. Detroit has shown that a shrinking city doesn’t have to be a declining city forever.

IBA projects, over the decades before 1980, used to be about flagship housing production, but since 1980, and especially IBA 2010’s approach, was drastically different. It concentrated on the consequences of socio-economic decline due to post-industrial and political transformations, manifested especially in urban shrinkage. IBA 2010 focussed on the issue of Saxony-Anhalt region’s shrinking cities and encouraged stakeholder groups to tackle the challenge with architectural creativity, social enthusiasm and intellectual rigour.

Already in 1977, the term “shrinking cities” had appeared in the discourse on German urbanism, when architect Oswald Mathias Ungers discussed this with his colleague architects Rem Koolhaas and Hans Kollhoff in Ungers’ urbanistically influential summer school on architecture in Berlin. The workshop was called *The Urban Villa*, and the participating architects’ attempt was to study the possibility of “a city within a city” and to find both realistic and “poetic” solutions to the pressing problem of West Berlin, which at that time was gradually losing its inhabitants. They proposed turning West Berlin into an archipelago of architectural projects with vast green spaces in between. This idea was taking one of Berlin’s pre-existing urban conditions – mega-blocks in an open space – further and to the “poetic” extreme. Based on this concept of *The Urban Villa*, Rem Koolhaas later made a proposal in 1980 for the Friedrichstadt area in Berlin, for the IBA International Building Exhibition of 1984-87.<sup>2</sup> The beginning of 1980’s seems thus to be when the theme of urbanistic shrinkage entered IBA’s circles as a weak signal of what was to be ahead, but it became a fully-grown megatrend for IBA’s activities later in 2000, when Saxony-Anhalt became its targeted area.

The difference to past exhibition projects was that in 2000-10 IBA concentrated fully not necessary only in building, but also in demolishing, selecting and focussing urban developments. IBA 2010, together with the heritage and research institution Bauhaus Dessau, and the state of Saxony-Anhalt’s development agency SALEG, compiled together projects and schemes for urban imagination, displaying targeted demolition, the programming of public spaces, ideas for social services, platforms for economic opportunities, and included also our *Betterfield* travel guide project, aiming to turn selective and speculative development into a brighter and *resilient* future.

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<sup>2</sup> Schnoor (2017).



Today, there is a lot of discussion in the field of urbanism about the resilience of cities and human habitations<sup>3</sup>. In this discourse, resilience is related to the endurance and flexibility against environmental risks and health threats, as well as “Black Swan” type unexpected difficulties, such as sudden economic collapses and natural catastrophes, but IBA started to look for recipes for resilient urban development already 20 years ago. In practice, IBA 2010 produced a toolkit of strategies tailor made for different types of cities in Saxony-Anhalt region, where the cities acted as experimental laboratories for resilient urbanism. IBA 2010 “recipes” included, for example, new kinds of ecological infrastructures, small-scale urban interventions and both organisational and physical platforms for citizen activation. IBA’s ideas linked to infrastructures and organisation were combined with plans for economic development in tourism, education and high-tech industries as well.

Before Stadtumbau 2010, the previous IBA programme had actually already tackled the challenge of the *post-industrial change* with the 1989-99 IBA Emscher Park programme, displaying and supporting Ruhr region’s transformation from a derelict industrial land into an industrial heritage park with construction for new cultural and educational institutions. Thus, IBA had already gained experience and reputation from processing the theme of urban and land-use shrinkage in Germany in areal scale. The local recipes for Emscher Park were very similar to the urban initiatives of IBA Urban Renewal 2000-2010. The local authorities were then asked to try new approaches to the urban and brownfield areas. In IBA 2010, for example in the city of Magdeburg, an earlier secluded Elbe riverfront landscape became the vital display of the city’s new urban identity. An old port became a science centre and brownfield sites were turned into nature parks. Another city, Köthen, was helped to utilise its heritage in homeopathy as a strategy for its urban development and as an attraction. Profiling as Lutherstadt, Wittenberg, as well as Naumburg, based their IBA-imbued strategy on the awareness of historic heritage and building culture. Merseburg focussed on the preconditions of creativity. Quedlinburg recognized the value of its traditional building construction type *Fachwerkhäuser*. Many cities had pulled down GDR era suburban block house areas and concentrated life now to the town centres.

In order to turn these schemes in reality with a maximum effect, the project participants, including also local citizen groups, used often imaginative means for acquiring vacant industrial land for new land use and construction. The “shrinking city” had been perceived as a problem so far, but in IBA’s demagogy, it became the starting point for thinking of new opportunities. The IBA understood itself as a laboratory, where various tools of urban change, based on “leanness” were used. The nineteen IBA cities managed to identify a number of opportunities hidden in their shrinking. Demolition became linked with the strengthening of the inner cities and the better utilisation of existing infrastructures.<sup>4</sup> Vacant lots and empty buildings were seen as opportunities to promote creativity through new use and open up possibilities of use that have not necessarily existed before. This is actually the typical viewpoint of the theory on *urban catalysts*. If a city has, for example, little industry left, but simultaneously a lot of history, it might prioritise the history in its selective development and branding. If there are less young people, then one could pay attention to the preconditions of getting more of them – family friendliness and education. Where local authorities can no longer stand their ground with adequate means, they could strengthen regional cooperation and emphasise the responsibility of private parties in order to survive together. If cities are becoming “rural” by emigration,

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. such books as The Routledge Handbook of Urban Resilience, Urban Resilience: Planning for Risk, Crisis and Uncertainty, Building Urban Resilience through Change of Use, and numerous contemporary conferences on the theme.

<sup>4</sup> Grellak; Pasternack (2016).

this might also be an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between the city and the landscape and create new notions and practices of urbanism and land-use.

In Saxony-Anhalt, local social and economic hot spots were identified with the help of IBA, schemes stemming from local history, or from other identified characteristics. Apparently, one of the key impacts of IBA in Saxony-Anhalt was not only the projects with new and reused buildings, but the mobilisation of local organisations, companies and investors to participate collaborative development projects, sharing the trust in the idea of qualitative development despite an actual shrinkage. IBA helped to develop an undetermined approach to urban development, where flexibility and shared resilience are key norms for survival.

## Going Back to Bitterfeld-Wolfen after Ten Years

The present Bitterfeld-Wolfen was formed in 2007-10, with the melting together of the towns of Bitterfeld and Wolfen, as well as the districts of Greppin, Holzweissig and Thalheim. It is at the moment the fourth largest city in Germany's region of Saxony-Anhalt.

Bitterfeld was originally built by a colony of Flemish immigrants in 1153. Today, covering 1 200 hectares, its Chemical Park has been a leading production site on the continent for more than 120 years and is one of the largest sites for chemical and pharmaceutical companies in Europe with such industry leaders as Bayer, AkzoNobel, Evonik, Lanxess and Dow. The district of Wolfen-Nord was built as a housing area for local industrial workers sixty years ago and expanded remarkably towards north in the GDR era with *Plattenbau* suburban concrete element block housing. Wolfen Nord had 38 000 inhabitants when the industry was still going strong and now it has shrunk to 8 500 people. Greppin used to be a historic village and became an industrial area in-between Bitterfeld and Wolfen. It also has a small upperclass housing area with fancy back gardens. Holzweissig is a historic village, its landscape transformed totally by coal mining. Thalheim is also a medieval village that borders the Chemical Park and is nowadays called also *Solar Valley* due to its solar cell industry and fields covered with photovoltaic panels. Right after 2010, most of the industry with photovoltaics was momentarily gone, because the production could not compete with Asia. Some research departments stayed on the site. In the very last year there seems to be a turnaround, when new factories in the photovoltaic industry have been established.

An example of the difficulty of programming growth in the city is that the technology park in Thalheim has been considered to be the centre of European solar cell production, but this does not seem to have had much positive impact in the city life. Even if the combined industrial areas in Bitterfeld-Wolfen are now one of the most important centres of industrial development in central Germany, and have a higher than average economic growth, the population is still shrinking. Bitterfeld-Wolfen seems to be an effective location for companies especially in the branch of chemical industry, but the city has problems in attracting new inhabitants.

One of the disadvantages of the city compared to other home locations in the surrounding cities is the proximity of housing to the industrial sites. The Chemical Park in the centre of Bitterfeld-Wolfen, joins the major parts of the city together, and is thus always present in the cityscape.

Despite of this characteristics, Bitterfeld-Wolfen has good starting points for a pleasing environment for everyday life. The town of Bitterfeld is still dominated by an idyllic historical centre with a picturesque market square, two churches, a historic town hall, a museum and the "Green Lung" park.

Only a few hundred metres from the market square is the new 24 square kilometre artificial Goitzsche lake, which was formerly an open cut lignite mine, and a lake promenade and a port. Already in 1991, the rehabilitation of the open mining pit had started. The flooding of the open cast holes from river Mulde

started in the year 1999 and was expected to take several years. However, suddenly, the exceptional flooding event of Mulde in August 2002 led to an unexpected filling of the Goitzsche, within two days, changing the situation of the town completely. The town of Bitterfeld was not anymore bordered by a huge scar in the nature, but a beautiful lake.

Today, in addition to Goitzsche Lake, Bitterweld-Wolfen has also many other excellent recreation areas. Some of the constructed attractions in the landscape, which we presented in the guide book, were already existing in 2008, such as the Pegelturm (water level tower), Villa am Bernsteinsee and Bitterfelder Bogen (Bitterfeld Arch, on a landfall hill), although they became updated for the possibilities of the year 2020 in the guidebook.



Image: We chose the stylish *Wallpaper City Guide Book* series (featuring for example the city of Berlin) as the starting point for the graphic image for the imaginary travel book – alleviating its architecturally-minded guide book purpose. Our production became an artistic interpretation of this powerful format, situated in the imaginary future.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Image source: <https://www.dexigner.com/news/9394>. Acquired on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

The new name which we suggested to the city - *Betterfield* - referred to the assumed original Flemish meaning of the name Bitterfeld. Simultaneously, the name opened a distance to the negative image associated with the name of Bitterfeld in the minds of the many Germans for whom it was equal to an environmental catastrophe, despite of the recent improvements in the city. Bitterfeld-Wolfen is an artificial name given to the area in 2007, and did not yet have too strong mental attachment. The even newer, more distanced name would support a fresh image and a new start, we thought, but in ten years, the name Bitterfeld-Wolfen has stuck, with a different – and more versatile and pleasing – image than its recent past with pollution and damage to nature<sup>6</sup>.

The intention behind the utopian travel guide was that it could be a catalyst. It is widely discussed within the discourse of contemporary urbanism<sup>7</sup>, that catalysts – such as temporary uses – can create unique environments for experiments and attract the creative sector and investments. It has also been recognized in the research on catalyst urbanism, that attractive destinations such as museums can bring in visitors and add commercial value consequently. The *Betterfield* guide displayed not only industrial and temporary reuses, but also ideas for new tourist attractions and cultural amenities. Local characteristics and peculiarities can be supported and developed to become catalysts and back up change, as IBA's Stadtumbau model shows.

Because we compiled a travel guide to the future – for the year 2020 – after ten years, we can now research the possible consequences of our project when the set time has struck, and see, how the city has changed. What was the influence of our input – if any? Is the city in any ways reminding of our prediction from the year 2010? How has the city changed during 2010-2020? Which have been the milestones of its evolution? Has the catalyst worked?

It is difficult to track direct consequential relationships between the *Betterfield* city guide and the actual development, but the guide book actually did have direct influence to the vision of “water city” – the development of Bitterfeld centre based on enhanced lakeshore activities and the possibility of building new canals. This would benefit the lake and the abundant water resources (largely due to river Mulde) of the area for both recreation and for creating attractive locations for housing. The further planning of the *Wasserstadt* – Watertown – is to be further advanced in 2021.<sup>8</sup>

There are also many strikingly analogous changes of Bitterfeld-Wolfen between 2010 and 2020 with the envisioning *Betterfield* city guide book:

#### IN WATER MANAGEMENT:

1) The guide book had direct influence to the vision of “water city” – the development of Bitterfeld centre based on enhanced lakeshore activities and the possibility of building new canals.

#### IN HERITAGE INDUSTRY:

2) The city of Bitterfeld-Wolfen has also taken benefit of the remnants of the industrial heritage for experience economy,

3) preserving and renovating the most prestigious historic buildings and quarters and

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<sup>6</sup> The image of the city has increased remarkably in the public: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Auswertung\\_Unternehmensumfrage001.pdf](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Auswertung_Unternehmensumfrage001.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The writer and urban activist Jane Jacobs elaborated an argument about urban catalysts already in her classic 1960s book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In his 1970s book *The Architecture of the City*, architect Aldo Rossi described the term “catalyst” as what he views as the “primary elements” of a city. Philipp Oswalt, with Klaus Overmeyer and Philipp Misselwitz expanded this notion to strategies of temporary use in their 2004 book *Urban Catalyst Strategies for Temporary Use*.

<sup>8</sup> Stefan Hermann, Vice Mayor of Bitterfeld-Wolfen, in an email to Antti Ahlava, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

4) transforming the former Agfa Filmfabrik Wolfen (VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen) into a remarkable culture centre for the whole city and the future.

IN SUSTAINABILITY:

5) Bitterfeld-Wolfen has become a great example of climate action in city scale.

IN CULTURE:

6) The city and its people and associations have developed high- and low-brow cultural offerings with an example of

7) more emphasis on the culture and free-time activities related to dog pets than general in the strategies of cities and

8) introducing multi-culturality to the formerly monocultural place,

9) and a service platform for commercial amenities.

IN SPORTS AND RECREATION:

10) There is new heavy emphasis on outdoor recreation as an asset for the city and a source of pleasure for citizens and tourists with

11) the development of a concentration of outdoor sports facilities especially in the sub-district of Greppin and

12) bicycle traffic routes as one key emphasis, as well as

IN COMMUNICATIONS:

13) the emergence of the use of handbooks and guidebooks to tell about the city's attractions and offerings.

Bitterfeld-Wolfen advertises itself today with the slogan “Wir Haben den Bogen raus” (We've got the hang of it). This sentence might have many interpretations, but at least it stands for the fact that the city has become a self-sufficient location for workplaces, a *post-shrunk city*. In the former GDR, no other city has made such a positive turnaround. However, in order to attract also inhabitants, the quality of everyday life and environment counts and culture, architecture and traffic infrastructure should have more importance than they apparently now have. Or does the city need new inhabitants at all?

## Population and economy

In *Betterfield* guide book, we wrote that Bitterfeld-Wolfen has decided its economy to spin around ecology and support all sustainable investments. This clear direction would guarantee to each inhabitant a high quality, clean environment. The city could run with sustainable energy, wind mills and solar panels.

We predicted that Bitterfeld-Wolfen would have now built an urban structure, which permits to live in a natural landscape, spreading on the leftover gaps left by shrinking inhabitation, but in the same time next to the work place. A good railway network would connect the main railway stops in the region so that people could commute easily without a car. In this scenario, Bitterfeld city centre would still be the commercial hub. A large greenhouse could be built in Greppin. The previously run-down and dusty Wolfen could gain new blood when a branch of a university would see daylight there and students come into the area. We thought that especially Northern Wolfen would benefit from students, with its low real estate prizes, allowing cheap restaurants and a student community to emerge. Still, wherever you go, you wouldn't miss the industrial areas. *Betterfield* would be a place where old and new industries can coincide with imaginative landscaping and architecture. That was our speculative, optimistic anticipation.

Now, ten years later, even if the amount of working places has increased in Bitterfeld-Wolfen, the population is still declining with app. 1 000 people every year, and in 2019 it was roughly 38 000.<sup>9</sup> In the Anhalt-Bitterfeld district, unemployment has dropped 15% to 9,6% during 2008–2016<sup>10</sup>. The population loss and the ageing of the citizens could not yet be stopped by 2020, but the city continues to work on it<sup>11</sup>.

The preconditions for work and housing have changed during the past decades, when remote work has become more popular and industry more efficient, requiring less people. The area already has one of the most modern European paper factories – producing paper for corrugated cardboard from recycled paper – (Progroup in the Sandersdorf part of the Chemical Park), but it requires reasonably few people to operate. Accordingly, one can see that there has appeared a new type of working-class, a new kind of work and new ways of working. Bitterfeld-Wolfen could become a place where manufacturing is maximally efficient and people live close to their work.

Bitterfeld-Wolfen in 2020 not only has a strong economy based on new jobs, but also a good health care system, growing numbers of tourists, and committed associations<sup>12</sup>. These are partially based on vital local communality, having maybe benefited IBA's catalysing strategies. Bitterfeld-Wolfen has become an attractive city to more workplaces and visitors. Its infrastructures for industry have been invigorated and its economy and tourism have grown, in the extent that the city is now one of the leading business locations in Germany, with approximately 360 companies and 12 000 jobs. Tourism seems to continue to develop well. The network city region had almost one million tourists in 2019<sup>13</sup>. This is as many as in such cities as Geneva, Xiamen, Atlanta, Dalian, Hangzhou, Dallas or Quito, which are much larger cities. The province has had more visitors than Tianjin or Philadelphia. Especially the Goitzsche lake is a recreation destination with a wide range of cultural and leisure opportunities. It keeps attracting an increasing number of tourists to the city every year.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Bevoelkerungszahlen - Stand 31.12.2019\\_StaLa\\_.pdf](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Bevoelkerungszahlen - Stand 31.12.2019_StaLa_.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.anhalt-bitterfeld.de/de/datei/anzeigen/id/23140,1247/zabi\\_0118\\_kennziff\\_wirtschaft.pdf](http://www.anhalt-bitterfeld.de/de/datei/anzeigen/id/23140,1247/zabi_0118_kennziff_wirtschaft.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Uwe Holz, the cultural director of the district of Anhalt-Bitterfeld, interviewed by Antti Ahlava on the 2nd of December 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Stefan Hermann, Vice Mayor, in an email to Antti Ahlava, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



Distances from nearest cities in kilometers

The nearby, competing Halle–Leipzig region is nowadays a booming area for homes, and the same population segment, who is attracted to there, could be possibly interested in moving to Bitterfeld-Wolfen. Bitterfeld-Wolfen locates just 15 minutes by train from Halle and Leipzig. Bitterfeld-Wolfen’s nature, good schools and nice village life are possibilities for remote workers as well. Image: *Betterfield*.



## Land-use, planning and urban design

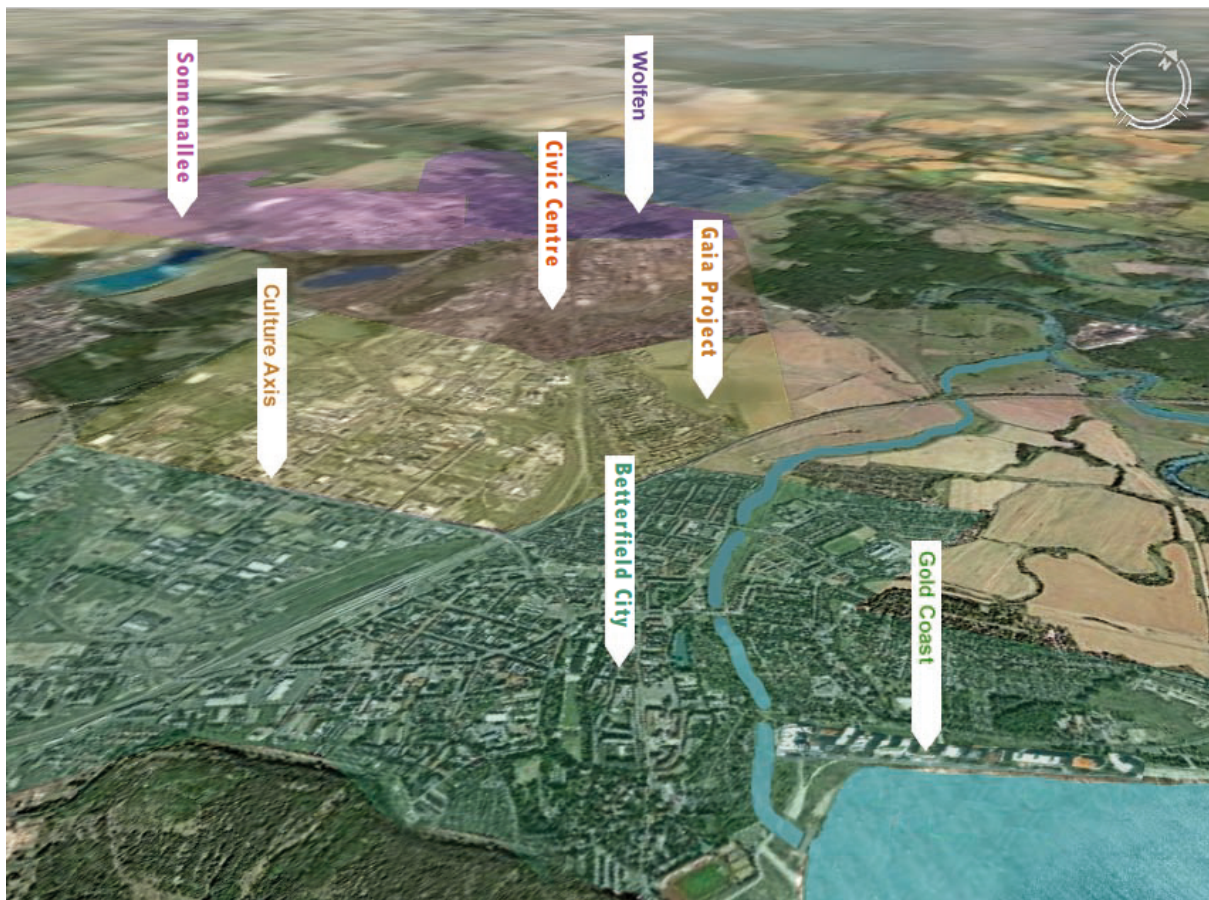


Image: Betterfield.

Our findings indicate small changes in *urban planning and design principles* during the past decade in Bitterfeld-Wolfen. Bitterfeld-Wolfen published a new land-use planning and the master plan in 2011 (Flächennutzungsplan). This emphasises the strengthening of the city centres of Bitterfeld and Wolfen with housing, workplaces and amenities. It also targets to implement urban infill and to make possible a heterogenous housing supply. The urban development concept STEK 2015-2025 continued on those lines. It was developed from 2013 to 2015 and is a working tool for the realisation of the master plan. With the consideration on the regional interdependence, the plan takes into account recent developments in the housing industry, economic development, and urban development and outlines new targets for them. The plan prioritised development areas, where the city sees the need to revitalise town centres and to further prioritise them compared to its fringes. Industry is seen as a great asset, which needs also future expansion areas and *climate action* is an important focus. Housing has been planned also within the industrial areas, which is courageous and analogous to our guidebook's intention to tap on unique local characteristics also with the diversity of housing.

The district of Anhalt-Bitterfeld has received almost ten million euros from the various programs to promote urban development since 2011. Of this, around 3.8 million euros have been made available for the city of Bitterfeld-Wolfen. Among other projects, funds from the "Urban Redevelopment East" program supported



the demolition of a total of more than 5 700 permanently vacant apartments. Around 870 000 euros have gone into the urban development of the so-called Dichterviertel, the northern part of Bitterfeld's centre<sup>14</sup>.

However, as Kunzmann writes in his conclusions on IBA's Emscher Park project, traditional land use planning does not bring along structural change<sup>15</sup>. In Bitterfeld-Wolfen's case, a proactive change has been more linked to city's renewed image, local collaboration, the support to business and developed traffic connections. Earlier the city was socially, mentally and physically scattered, but now it is more united, and its parts recognize common gains. These include strategic aims for creating and maintaining an ambitious economic and R&D development cluster, directing tourism and organising events.

The development of public transport and especially rail connections has been elemental for the functioning of the region and Bitterfeld-Wolfen is now well connected to the university cities Magdeburg, Halle, Leipzig and Berlin. The state of Saxony-Anhalt has given millions of euros to the development of the future of the former coalmine areas towards sustainable infrastructure and mobility, supporting also public transport. Many inhabitants have moved to a detached houses in nearby villages, increasing traffic. A survey has identified a strong need to even more develop public traffic connections<sup>16</sup> and the city's intention is to improve the smaller stops in the villages, which seem to be able to attract new inhabitants also in the future.<sup>17</sup> The state has recognised the potential in smaller villages. In the last funding period (2007-2014), the state supported 63 rural development measures in the Anhalt-Bitterfeld district with around 2.6 million euros, where most of these projects were implemented in the field of village renewal or village development.<sup>18</sup> This tendency is in contrast with the efforts to concentrate development to Bitterfeld and Wolfen, but not in contrast with the functioning of a contemporary network city.

In 2008 we anticipated, that there will be beautiful nature full of possibilities for outdoor activities "as far as you can see", and actually, in 2011, Bitterfeld-Wolfen published its concise nature conservation plan to protect the environment. The plan defines the landscape protection area, nature reserve, biosphere reserve, bird sanctuary and natural monuments. In the same year, the city published also its list of preservation of historical sites. The environmental sins of the past have been in large extent eliminated, lake water purified and post-mining soils and groundwater have been at least partially rehabilitated, even if the groundwater problems will be likely to persist still in the future<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.investieren-in-Saxony-Anhalt.de/presse/nachrichten-iisa/2015/11/Kabinettsitzung-Bitterfeld-Wolfen> (2015)

<sup>15</sup> Kunzmann (2017).

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Auswertung\\_Unternehmensumfrage001.pdf](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Auswertung_Unternehmensumfrage001.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Uwe Holz, the cultural director of the city, interviewed by Antti Ahlava on the 2nd of December 2020.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.investieren-in-Saxony-Anhalt.de/presse/nachrichten-iisa/2015/11/Kabinettsitzung-Bitterfeld-Wolfen>

<sup>19</sup> Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.



### Bitterfeld city centre the new water routes

The re-established old river through Bitterfeld and the moat around the historical centre add new activity to the city centre. At the same time they connect the city to its origins and promote a feeling of continuity. You can take a promenade from the lake Goitzsche through the city centre all the way to the river Mulde. In the new marina you can hire yourself a boat

or a canoe and take a trip on water. There are some new restaurants and bars along the river, too.

Image: *Betterfield.*



### Die Blaue Oase

This water hotel near to the shore offers not only the inhabitants of Bitterfeld-Wolfen an escape from the boring land, but also a place for the tourists who want to accommodate in an exotic environment. The water hotel is built of the old Plattenbau elements. The water hotel platform also serves the people who do not want to get wet. The 24 hour beer garden

does not leave you thirsty. The water hotel also offers the customers a possibility to dive into the sea underneath the water surface from a specially designed hatch. Which room did you reserve?

Image: *Betterfield*.

In the utopian travel guide, we presented numerous ways of turning the free resource of the area – water – into an attraction and a tool for enhancing new experiential activities. The landscape is abundant with natural waters and also historically, the city of Bitterfeld was based on a river and a defence canal surrounded its core. The vision – which we were involved in developing at the time 2007-2010, about establishing an imaginative array of water-themed activities by the new lake and restoring the historic waterways – is currently about to be further developed and conceptually



examined by the city: the *water city* of Bitterfeld-Wolfen. Our ideas have also been used for a specific project sketch to build canals in the inner city<sup>20</sup>.

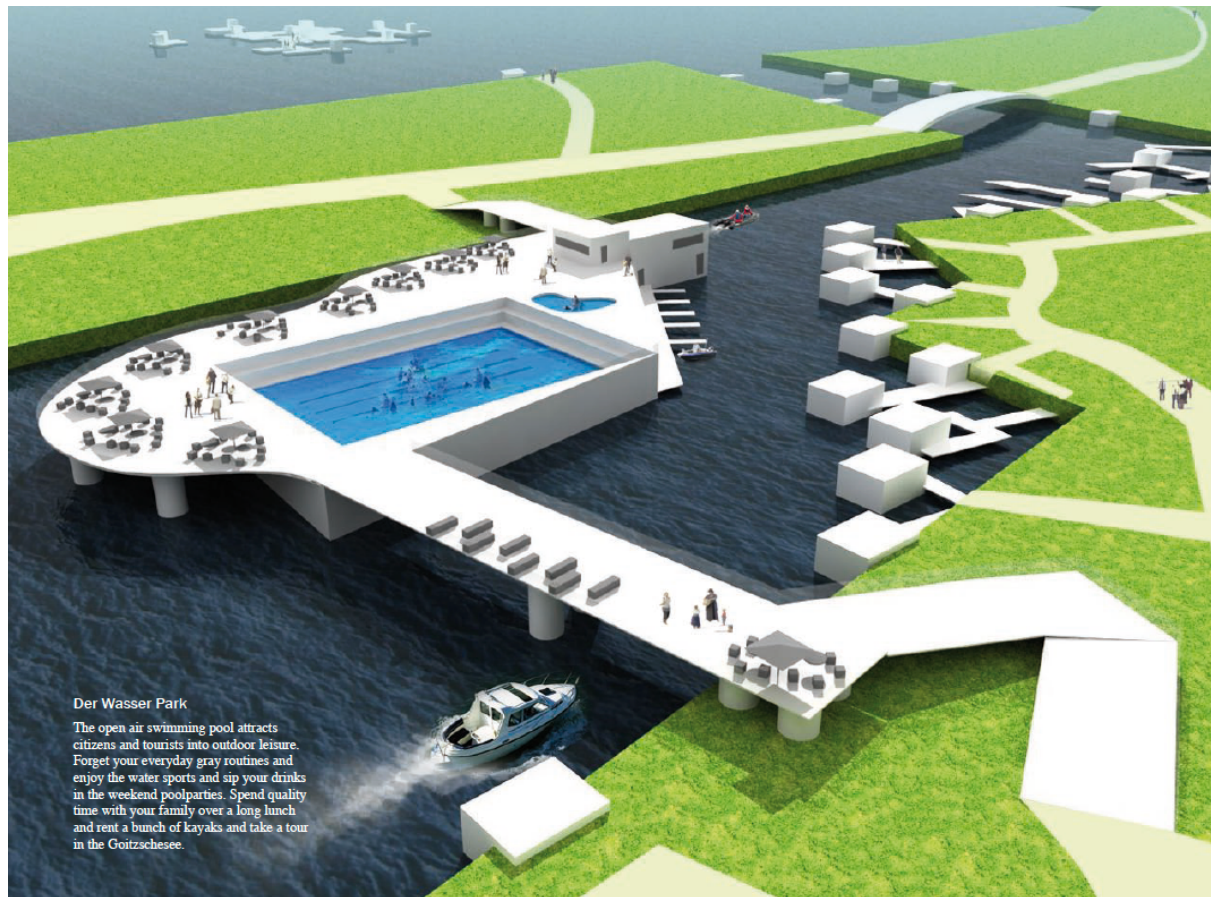


Image: *Betterfield*.

One of the consequences of the *Betterfield* project may have been that the city saw fruitful possibilities in further mobilising international architect groups to work for the city's improvement. The guidebook project might have also helped to identify the coastal area of Goitzsche See in the centre of Bitterfeld as a potential location for future housing. With the European 12 competition (2012-13), the city participated with young architects from France, Spain and Germany in designing an area on the Bitterfeld waterfront through an architecture competition. The official planning for the implementation of this city's largest residential construction project (approx. 300 new residential unit) is ongoing<sup>21</sup>. Organising European 12 in Bitterfeld-Wolfen was analogous to the *Betterfield* project's finding to utilise the Goitzsche lake as an attraction for new living as well, not only recreation.

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Hermann, Vice Mayor, in an email to Antti Ahlava, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Stefan Hermann, Vice Mayor, in an email to Antti Ahlava, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

## Culture



### The Agfa Multicultural Centre

The Agfa Multicultural Centre is the heart of Betterfield's Industrial Park. It's a place to go for everyone interested in arts, music, cinema, theatre etc.. You can join one of the many festivals or smaller events organized in this old Agfa headquarters, or you can just enter the outstanding courtyard and meet all the interesting people of different cultures and ethnicities.

Image: *Betterfield*.

In 2008, we described, how *Betterfield* is a city of four lively centres, each of them with own distinctive style and way of life. Still, they would all be easy to approach and visit, displaying cultural diversity from high-brow to underground.

In actuality, the city nowadays promotes and supports openly art everywhere in the city to bring artists, initiatives and creative ideas into the public eye. In addition to sporadic events, there has been also more repeating anchors. The second art and culture week took place in Bitterfeld-Wolfen in 2020 and the city nominates a cultural ambassador from Bitterfeld-Wolfen every year. The Bitterfeld-Wolfen music school, with facilities in Köthen and Zerbst, is one of the largest music schools in Germany. 79 teachers teach around 1280 students<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.investieren-in-Saxony-Anhalt.de/presse/nachrichten-iisa/2015/11/Kabinettsitzung-Bitterfeld-Wolfen> and Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.



## 2. Kunst- & Kulturwoche in Bitterfeld-Wolfen



Images: The second Art and Culture Week had events of multiple art forms<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Image source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wissens-cms/redaktionell/314/2\\_Kunst\\_und\\_Kulturwoche.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wissens-cms/redaktionell/314/2_Kunst_und_Kulturwoche.html).





Image: An example of local cultural events is the Jufo Festival, which took place in Bitterfeld-Wolfen in 2019. Young people between 12 and 27 years from Saxony-Anhalt were able to exchange ideas in a festival atmosphere, present their leisure projects, attend workshops, and listen to live concerts.<sup>24</sup>

The most important communal cultural meeting place in Bitterfeld-Wolfen is the municipal cultural centre – *Städtisches Kulturhaus Bitterfeld-Wolfen* – which has a history of more than ninety years. Its building was built in 1927 by the company Filmfabrik Wolfen and served mainly as an event location for the employees of its former Wolfen film factory until the political change in 1989. The city of Wolfen had acquired the building in 1997 and music, theatre and dance events continued there until 2005. We suggested in 2008 the then dysfunctional building to become developed as a culture centre for the whole city, and this actually became reality. In 2014, the building was totally renovated by the city, fitted with contemporary technology and expanded. The building has become an important part of socialist cultural heritage and now it occupies a museum, a library and it continuously organises events<sup>25</sup>. The team of the culture centre, in cooperation with various organizers and agencies, continues to offer guests a wide range of different genres in culture. In addition to events for children and young people, it also hosts cabarets, musicals, ballets, operas, operettas, and other performing arts.

<sup>24</sup> There is a video about the festival here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNBNC8fMkVY&t=6s>. Image source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_scms/\\_redaktionell/287/Demokratie\\_leben/2787/Jufo\\_Festival\\_2019\\_in\\_Bitterfeld\\_Wolfen.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_scms/_redaktionell/287/Demokratie_leben/2787/Jufo_Festival_2019_in_Bitterfeld_Wolfen.html)

<sup>25</sup> Uwe Holz, interviewed by Antti Ahlava on the 2nd of December 2020.

Another building, Bitterfeld's historic *Kulturpalast* is now planned to be reused as a cultural location with also a great socialistic history<sup>26</sup>. It was established in 1954 and built originally with many volunteer workers from the factories around. It was a gem in the cultural life of Bitterfeld as it was the Kulturhaus of Wolfen. It was also a birthplace for a cultural political programme of the GDR called "Bitterfelder Weg".<sup>27</sup>

Culture-led regeneration strategies to address shrinkage were already used with IBA Emscher Park, but the difference to IBA Sachsen-Anhalt in organization is that IBA Emscher Park was an explicitly top-down project, even if they both shared the reinforcement of local identity. Especially in Emscher Park's Zeche Zollverein, culture strengthened local economy through administrated investments to new institutions<sup>28</sup>. In Bitterfeld-Wolfen, culture has, through recent years, had its important role in strengthening existing local identity and quality of life through collaborations between public and private parties with local associations.

Impressive historic buildings have not been reused in Bitterfeld-Wolfen as extensively as in for example Zeche Zollverein, but for example, in the Chemical Park, an entrepreneur recently reused an historic cantilevered hall from 1936 as offices and production space. With this project, the last ruins in the historic Area A of the Chemical Park disappeared. This piece of the old film factory was now filled with energy again. In March 2014, the city library in Bitterfeld city moved from the old domicile in Burgstrasse to the historic town hall from 1865 in Bitterfeld. An example of the support from the city to local communities and associations is that in 2016, that former city library in Bitterfeld became the "Loberschule residential community" for seniors of the district of social services.

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<sup>26</sup> Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Kunzmann (2017).





**Christian, 32 yrs, Gardener**

Christian came to Betterfield to lead a green and healthy lifestyle. "Gardening is my true passion, I couldn't simply live without my dear flowers and plants."

Quite naturally, the highlight of Christian's year is the annual vegetable fair held in Greppin, pumpkins being his speciality. Christian is a man of an outdoorsy character and also likes to do sports to stay fit. "In

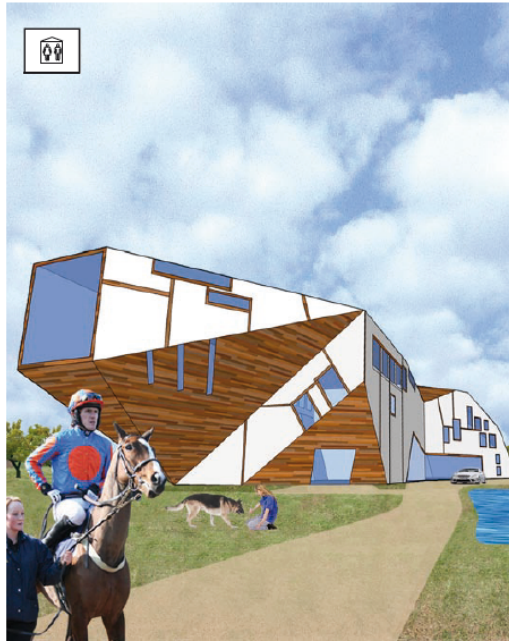
Greppin I can combine these two essential things. I really enjoy jogging in the green surroundings of the area."

Image: *Betterfield*.

Possibilities for community gardening were seen in 2008-10 as an important asset for *Betterfield*, with its many vacant in-between areas. Bitterfeld-Wolfen is actually, currently, working on an application for the State Garden Show 2027 of Saxony-Anhalt in the city. In doing so, they are also trying to win over the organiser of the show for ideas such as walkable and greened pipe bridges from the chemical industry, very much aligned with our visions for the reuse of this technical infrastructure.<sup>29</sup>

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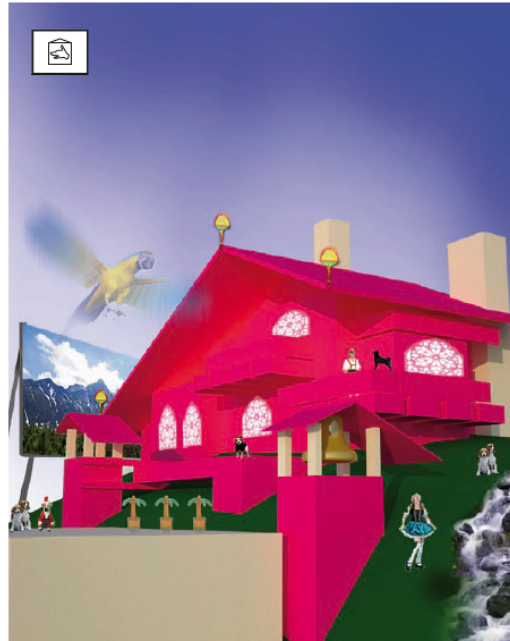
<sup>29</sup> Stefan Hermann, Vice Mayor, in an email to Antti Ahlava, on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020.



#### Die Kuh-Herde + Das Fabeltier

This place gathers all the animal enthusiasts and trotting-race gamblers from all over the Saxony-Anhalt and around. The hotel complex consists of two separate hotels, one for pet owners and the other for animals, so it is holiday for the both of you as you can leave your pet into caring hands – and your best friend surely gets its full board. Both the hotels

are kinda “kitschy”, but in a studied way. Hotel for the pet owners is a modern, free-form version of the traditional German *Fachwerk* with a view towards the Central Park. The pet hotel is somewhat more eccentric in its magenta-coloured country-romanticism - you have been warned. The environment is ideal for every kind of animal sport: besides the trotting-race



track and a greyhound race track nearby there is a steeplechase track, a hall for agility and other competitions, staple accommodations, different agility courses and lots of open landscape for outdoor activities, for example riding. The hotel is located in an immediate nearness of the Greppin Tiergehege, a zoo of country animals. The children can take care of the

animals and at the same time they learn about the nature.

Image: *Betterfield*. *Betterfield* guide book was preceded by an analysis of the area and its culture, including the research on social media users in the city. This revealed a special interest in the area for dogs and pet animals in general. The travel guide included, consequently, a presentation of two animal-friendly hotels – *Die Kuh-Herde* and *Das Fabeltier* – gathering “animal enthusiasts and trotting-race gamblers from all over the Saxony-Anhalt and beyond”. One hotel was for pet owners and the other for animals, enabling “a holiday for the both of you as you can leave your pet into caring hands”. The design of both of the hotels was deliberately “kitschy”, but in a sustainable, academic manner. The hotel for the pet owners was modern, a free-form version of the traditional German *Fachwerk* construction with a view towards a newly established park. The pet hotel would be more eccentric in its “magenta-coloured country romanticism”. This environment was to be ideal for every kind of animal sports. Besides the trotting-race track and a greyhound track nearby, there would be a steeplechase track, a hall for agility and other competitions, staple accommodations, different agility courses and a large open landscape for outdoor activities with animals, for example riding. The hotel is located in an immediate nearness of the *Greppin Tiergehege*, a future zoo of country animals. The children could take care of the animals and at the same time learn about the nature.

Something about the accuracy of our conclusion that pet animals have a special role in Bitterfeld-Wolfen tells that in 2017, Bitterfeld-Wolfen conducted an experiment to determine if public toilets for dogs are needed.



Image: *Betterfield*.

## Climate action

Stemming from the solar industry, we anticipated the need for further sustainability activities – to produce more renewable energy and diminish pollution drastically. Germany actually aims to become largely greenhouse gas neutral by the middle of the century and with the amendment of the Building Code from 2011, climate protection became part of the building planning law everywhere in Germany. Climate protection appears as an independent goal alongside the protection of the environment<sup>30</sup>. Bitterfeld-Wolfen has already taken steps in this direction with its urban redevelopment activities in recent years. For example, concrete material from dismantled Wolfen-Nord has become reused in new construction. In the redevelopment of the city, the existing building fabric of the city centre of Bitterfeld and its Dichterviertel has been preserved, thus saving the embedded CO<sub>2</sub>, the production of new building materials, and the replacement buildings. Actually, the data analysis within STEK 2015-25 shows that Dichterviertel – the northern part of Bitterfeld centre – has been the only growing housing area within the city, signalling about the attraction of historic milieus. As a part of urban redevelopment, the revitalization of old buildings in the centre of Bitterfeld represents a large potential for energy savings in terms of optimised use and infrastructure, but this also represents the attraction of historic garden city blocks.

<sup>30</sup> According to Section 1a (5) of the BauGB, the requirements of climate protection must be taken into account in the land-use planning.

Recently, along the Burgstrasse and within the site of Bitterfeld's medieval town core, a new urban infill housing area with flats was established. It filled an empty space in the middle of the city, which was originally created by tearing down old houses from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the 1970's. All of these flats have been rented out within days.<sup>31</sup>

The awareness of climate change and the rising energy prices will challenge to not only the individual homeowner but also a future-oriented development on the city scale. In order to pursue the climate protection goals further, to meet funding providers' requests to examine the municipal potential for reducing emissions, and to take the results into account when applying funding, Bitterfeld-Wolfen used the opportunity within the framework of the ERDF period 2014 -2020 to apply funding within two climate protection sub-categories. Two geographical areas were identified, whose existing frameworks were compatible with the ERDF program – the towns of Bitterfeld and Wolfen. For Bitterfeld-Wolfen, this climate protection project consists of an analysis of the initial situation, a presentation of initial successes, the opening of further fields of action, opportunities for municipal efficiency strategies and the acquisition of grants for municipal and private investments.

Energy generation is becoming increasingly sustainable in the city, especially through photovoltaics. Vast solar panel fields have been located in the centre of the city on former industrial lots. With the existing systems alone, an output of around 40 MW can be generated on an area of 116 hectares. It means that 29 000 households can theoretically be supplied with this renewable electricity. This is roughly the size of Bitterfeld-Wolfen. The industries and other workplaces need also electricity and thus more PV systems can be found on roof and exterior wall surfaces in the city. Here, together with other partners, the city started the "1000 Roofs Programme" to help solar energy spread more widely. With various activities such as consultation days for residents, numerous projects for the generation of solar power on private houses and public buildings have been implemented.

Wind energy plays also a role in the city. There are large wind turbines in the areas of Bobbau and Rödgen. In general, the amendment to the Renewable Energy Sources Act has created new framework conditions that have a significant impact on the expansion of regenerative energies.

In 2008, we wrote that wind and sun are the natural resources which can assure a sustainable and long future to all human activities. Since its birth, Bitterfeld- Wolfen has firmly decided to produce energy with sustainable resources. Around the city, there's still a lot of vacant space to install windmills. One cannot say that the Betterfield guide book was the cause for this direction of a city supercharged with green energy, but it recognised the same imperative and local advantages.

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<sup>31</sup> Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.





Image: The new “technologic” landscape, where solar panel farms spread on former agricultural fields and windmills roll in the background, is attractive for visitors with its futuristic ambiance and for its functioning to the locals: tourists, students and the city population frequently go to the “mills field” for walking and curious observation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Image source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_s-cms/redaktionell/268/News\\_Archiv\\_2014\\_archive\\_2014\\_/1355/Erneuerbare\\_Energien\\_auf\\_dem\\_Vormarsch.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_s-cms/redaktionell/268/News_Archiv_2014_archive_2014_/1355/Erneuerbare_Energien_auf_dem_Vormarsch.html)



### Border of the lake

The border of the lake is a quiet area to practice sport and walk during the all year. In the hot season it becomes the attractive pole for all the inhabitants and the growing tourism of Bitterfeld-Wolfen. There are a lot of activities like the sailing boats and catamaran club, the bike rental and several markets, cultural and sport events. Some enterprises which work with renewable energies propose their own novelties dur-

ing the week end and people can try them. A didactic walk around the Goitzsche lake illustrates the coal mine past and the role of Bitterfeld-Wolfen in the DDR. This area can be reached easily from the whole Bitterfeld-Wolfen area through green-belts.

Image: *Betterfield.*



### Gold Coast

The old open coal mine used to be a scar in Bitterfeld's image, but after flooding it has gained new life as a Goitzsche lake. International developers became interested in valuable land and started building hotels, villas and leisure centres along the shoreline. After 10 years of construction the coal mine has turned into gold mine. During summer many festivals and events take place in this area, which in turn at-

tracts tourists. Area is alive night and day, so if you are after south-European style partying, then head to the Gold coast.

Image: *Betterfield*: The Goitzsche lakefront.

## Recreation and Tourism

Goitzsche Lake is increasingly popular with visitors. The *Betterfield* guide tells that the border of the lake is a quiet area to practice sport and walk all year round. In the hot season, it becomes an attractive point for all inhabitants and the growing tourism. There are a lot of activities with sailing boats and a catamaran club, bike rental and several markets, cultural and sport events.

Today, within the radius of 1 ½ km from the lake, the land prices have gone up radically. The lake has become so popular that even vacant car parking spaces have become rare<sup>33</sup>. The renewed Camping and Holiday Park by the lake was completed in 2020 for all-year use and the park is still expanding with new holiday homes and tents for campers and caravans. A restaurant is also under construction. The pandemic situation in 2020-21, with less international tourist travels, made the region Bitterfeld-Wolfen an increasingly attractive destination for especially campers<sup>34</sup>.

We predicted in 2008, that the lakefront can become an attractive place for recreation, such as bicycling. Today, there is nice 25 km long bicycle trail surrounding the lake, stemming from the city bicycle traffic concept developed in 2011. The concerns for various user groups of cyclist have been taken into account. There has been a lot of bicycle tourism lately, because of the new routes in the beautiful landscape. One reason why the region has gained a lot of new bicycling tourists is that the area is a new destination for

<sup>33</sup> Uwe Holz, interviewed by Antti Ahlava on the 2nd of December 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.

them<sup>35</sup>. Routes have been developed. In addition to the renewed bicycle network, cycle route signage, public transport links, and several bicycle parking areas have emerged. At the moment, the city is gathering ideas for a suitable service infrastructure for electric bicycles as well.<sup>36</sup>



Image: In the city's bicycle traffic concept, the aim is to increase the attractiveness of cycling for locals and visitors through a complete network of cycle routes to connect key destinations. In addition to local connections, another aim is to achieve seamless connections to the surrounding places.<sup>37</sup>

*Betterfield* guide saw the historic heritage and especially *the historic industrial buildings* as assets for recreation and tourism, based on their identity and reuse. Nowadays, there operates a company, which owns most of the industrial infrastructure and takes care of the of the maintenance and heritage, as well collaborates the organisation of guided tours and operates landing services, event management and other services for the users of the historic real estate<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Uwe Holz, in an email to Antti Ahlava on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2021.

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_s-cms/redaktionell/308/Verkehrsentwicklung/2660/Radverkehrskonzeption\\_der\\_Stadt\\_Bitterfeld\\_Wolfen.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_s-cms/redaktionell/308/Verkehrsentwicklung/2660/Radverkehrskonzeption_der_Stadt_Bitterfeld_Wolfen.html)

<sup>37</sup> Image source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_s-cms/redaktionell/308/Verkehrsentwicklung/2660/Radverkehrskonzeption\\_der\\_Stadt\\_Bitterfeld\\_Wolfen.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_s-cms/redaktionell/308/Verkehrsentwicklung/2660/Radverkehrskonzeption_der_Stadt_Bitterfeld_Wolfen.html)

<sup>38</sup> Chemiapark Bitterfeld-Wolfen GmbH is the mutual real estate company in question.



**Details:**

Dauer der Tour: 2,5 bis 3 Stunden inkl. Besichtigungen der Häuser + je 10 min. Fußweg zwischen den Gebäuden.

Parkplätze, Gastronomie & Toiletten sind vorhanden.

Die Tour ist geeignet für Menschen mit Mobilitätsbeschränkungen.

Kosten: 7,50 € p. P. (keine Ermäßigungen)

Nur nach Voranmeldung, ab 7 Personen pro Tour.

**Tourverlauf:**

1. **Treffpunkt / 1. Station:**  
Haupteingang des Rathauses Bitterfeld-Wolfen, Rathausplatz 1, 06766 Bitterfeld-Wolfen

2. **Station:**  
Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen mit Führung durch die Ausstellung, Bunsenstr. 4, 06766 Bitterfeld-Wolfen

3. **Station:**  
Städtisches Kulturhaus mit Besichtigung ausgesuchter Räume im Haus, Puschkinplatz 3, 06766 Bitterfeld-Wolfen

**Ende:**  
Rathaus Bitterfeld-Wolfen

Parkmöglichkeiten am Rathausplatz oder im Rathaushof (Fußweg über Jahrstraße 35)



**IndustrieKulTour Wolfen**

Vom Rathaus zum Industrie- und Filmmuseum, zum Städtischen Kulturhaus und zurück.

Drei Denkmäler der Baukultur zwischen 1909 und 1939, die noch heute genutzt werden, wenn auch teilweise anders als früher.

Ein Angebot des **CAMPUS BITTERFELD-WOLFEN E.V.** im Rahmen von 100 Jahre Bauhaus Dessau und Teil der **WelterbeRegion Sachsen-Anhalt**.

Ein Angebot des **CAMPUS BITTERFELD-WOLFEN E.V.** im Rahmen von 100 Jahre Bauhaus Dessau und Teil der **WelterbeRegion Sachsen-Anhalt**.



**Wohnungs- und Baugesellschaft Wolfen mbH**  
Tel. 03494 3951-100  
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www.wbgwolfen.de



**Start- und Endpunkt unserer IndustriekulTour**  
aus **Rathaus Bitterfeld-Wolfen**

Es entstand als Hauptgebäude 041 der Filmfabrik Wolfen in den Jahren 1936 bis 1939. Damals war der Betrieb die größte Filmfabrik Europas und in einigen Bereichen, z. B. dem Färbeln, weltweit führend. Der Architekt Adolf Hoesinger fand eine originelle Lösung für die Errichtung eines repräsentativen Hauptverwaltungsgebäudes, die Verknüpfung von Verwaltungs- und Forschungsgebäude. Für die optimale Umsetzung der zwei Funktionen wurde zunächst der zentrale zentrale Rumbau mit zwei Eckräumen errichtet, der als Verwaltungs- und Direktionsgebäude diente. An den Rundbau anließen sich der Ost- und Westflügel, in die jeder den Wasserschiff, um moderater Bedingungen für die Filmbroschur.

Nachdem Anfang der 80er Jahre die Privatisierung der ORWO Filmfabrik gescheitert war, wurde das Gebäude 041 bis 1994 als Zweigstelle der Treuhand betriebsfähig. Nach Abwicklung der Filmfabrik wurden vier Jahre durch die Wolfener Vermögensgesellschaft genutzt, stand das Gebäude von 1996 bis 2006 leer.

2010 erwarb die Wohnungs- und Baugesellschaft Wolfen das Gebäude und sanierte es schrittweise. Heute beherbergt es neben der Stadtverwaltung mehrere Unternehmen, gastronomische und Freizeiteinrichtungen.



Nach etwa 10 Minuten Fußweg erreichen wir die zweite Station, das **Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen**

Das Gebäude ist einige Jahre als das Rathaus. Es wurde als Teil der Filmfabrik Wolfen bereits 1909/1910 errichtet. Hier wurden die berühmten Farbfilme produziert.

In den heutigen Museumsräumen sehen Sie, wie viele Arbeitsschritte notwendig sind, bis ein Film für 90 Aufnahmen im Geschäft zum Erwerb bereit liegt. Den Besucher erwartet ein interessanter Einblick in die Produktionsbedingungen eines der wenigen noch erhaltenen Gebäude der ehemaligen Filmfabrik Wolfen „Jugelfabrik“.

Weiß gefärbte Räume zum Aufschreiben der Emulsion, eine gewaltige Bepinselmaschine aus den 30er Jahren am Originalstandort sowie große Gänge zum Transportieren der mit Emulsion besetzten Unterlage verbinden den Museumsbesuch mit ihrem eigenwilligen Flair eines Hauch von Industriemärkte. Im Museum befindet sich außerdem die größte öffentlich zugängliche Filmsammlung Sachsen-Anhalts. Hier findet eine Vielzahl spannender Veranstaltungen rund um den Film statt. Zum Beispiel werden regelmäßig DGR-Filmproduktionen gezeigt, bei welchen die Hauptdarsteller oder Regisseure anwesend sind.

Die Führung im Museum dauert rund 60 Minuten.



Die dritte Station erreichen wir nach weiteren 10 Minuten Fußweg, das **Städtische Kulturhaus Wolfen**

Das Städtische Kulturhaus ist die bedeutendste kulturelle Begegnungstätte der Stadt.

1927 von den AGFA-Werken errichtet, diente das Gebäude hauptsächlich als Veranstaltungsort für die Mitarbeiter der ehemaligen Filmfabrik Wolfen. Erst mit der Übernahme des Kulturhauses durch die Stadt im Jahr 1991 konnten die Voraussetzungen dafür geschaffen werden, dass das Kulturhaus in wachsender Maße Bedeutung für die Region und darüber hinaus gewann. Dass war eine Vielzahl von Modernisierungsmaßnahmen notwendig.

Diese Kulturstätte hat in über 90 Jahren ihres Bestehens das gesellschaftliche Leben in der Region geprägt und soll auch in den kommenden Jahren als kulturelles Mittelpunkt des Lebens der Bürger und Gäste der Stadt Bitterfeld-Wolfen beschirmen. Hier wird Kunst verschiedenster Art nicht nur konzentriert sondern auch produziert, denn eine Vielzahl von Vereinen hat im Kulturhaus ihre künstlerische Heimat.

Vom Kulturhaus aus gehen wir erneut ca. 5 Minuten zu Fuß zurück zum Rathaus. Hier haben Sie die Gelegenheit, sich im **CAMPUS DAFE** zu stärken, einige regionale Souvenirs zu erwerben und sich danach entspannt auf den Heimweg oder zum nächsten Ausflugsort zu begeben.

Image: The Industrial tour in Wolfen is part of the *Welterbe Card* of Anhalt-Dessau-Wittenberg area and part of the "Bauhaus Dessau and Modernity" campaign for the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus school in 2019. Three monuments of the building culture between 1909 and 1939, which are still in use today, can be visited on this tour with an expert guide.<sup>39</sup>

Historically, there has been many industrial innovations made in Wolfen, such as the first industrially manufactured photographic and cinema colour film and important synthetic fibres. The heritage of the local ORWO – Original Wolfen – film factory<sup>40</sup> has been preserved in the Industrie- und Filmmuseum Wolfen, established in 2010. The establishment of the museum was very much in line with our imperative to cherish and promote the local, world-class industrial and engineering history.

<sup>39</sup> Image source: <http://www.cp-news.de/aktuell/aus-der-region/detailansicht-region/archiv/2019/april/artikel/industriekultour-wolfen.html>

<sup>40</sup> est. 1909 as Agfa Filmfabrik Wolfen, later IG Farben, in the GDR also operated under the name VEB Film- und Chemiefaserwerk Agfa Wolfen and later VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen



### Activity points industrial areas

In the industrial areas you have activity points using the huge spatial potential of industrial facilities, roof terraces are transformed to tennis courts and skating rinks and the old ORWO water tower has a fitness centre on the top.

The activity points are accessible by an interconnection of cable car pipes, escalators, solar cars and hot-air balloons. You

can move in all different dimensions and experience the environment in a new way. You can experience the city in all different dimensions.

Image: *Betterfield*.

In the Insider's Guide section of *Betterfield*, we wrote that "Greppin is a small village-like place housing most of the city's sporting facilities. Anything from golf ranges to greyhound-racing tracks."

Due to the high demand from citizens, Bitterfeld-Wolfen actually did build street workout sports facilities in Greppin in 2019<sup>41</sup>. The facilities display an unorthodox approach to sporting activities with the effect of maintaining health. The aim of the project was to expand the sports and cultural centre in Greppin, contribute to keeping the population in the village, and to attract people of all ages from the surrounding districts. The project was funded within the framework of the rural development programme of the state of Saxony-Anhalt 2014-2020, by using the European development method for local rural areas, “Support for local development”, LEADER (CLLD). The project is also part of the European Commission’s policy implementation within the framework of “Promotion of local development in rural areas” funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the State of Saxony-Anhalt.<sup>42</sup> It is clear that the development of the city, also in this respect, has in great part been the outcome of very actively seeking for public funds from different sources to support local development.

## The future of population and services

Computational need-supply optimisation applied to the challenge of shrinking cities would in large scale produce most likely a suggestion to welcome migrant people to a shrinking region. This could, for example, be those, who come from outside Europe. The City of Detroit has used this device to attract people to its shrinking areas, through an internationally promoted homestead programme<sup>43</sup>. In micro-scale – in the scale of urban design – the response to shrinking is not that simple, because competition between regions and cities enters the equation.

*Betterfield* guide book predicted an emergence of a multicultural spirit that “travellers with ethnic background should not wary, all the skinheads have grown hair and some even turned into nature loving hippies” and that “Betterfield could boast as being one of the most multi-cultural places in Saxony-Anhalt today”.

The city of Bitterfeld-Wolfen has actually noticed the potential of immigrants for, at least partially, filling the gap left by people moving out and by the diminishing birth rate. The “made-to-measure appointments” of the federal Refugee Training Programme supports small and medium-sized companies in filling their vacant training positions with suitable young people from elsewhere Germany and abroad. This practice was implemented with local non-profit economic sector chamber organisations and consultants. Since the start of the programme in 2007, app. 100 000 training positions and more than 10 000 positions with entry-level qualifications have been successfully filled. A new information booklet, entitled "Benefitting the Potential to Hire Refugees", shows companies how to hire immigrants and displays the support options for this.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The new facilities were set up near the Greppin Sports Forum, between the volleyball facility and soccer field.

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/ELER\\_OT\\_Greppin\\_Trimm-Dich-Anlage.pdf](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/ELER_OT_Greppin_Trimm-Dich-Anlage.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.modeldmedia.com/features/shrinkage.aspx>, acquired on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> The consultants in the refugee training programme visit and advise companies, determine the needs for trainees, create requirement profiles, look for potential trainees, look through application documents and carry out selection interviews and recruitment tests. They cooperate with other organisations active in vocational training, including employment agencies. On this basis, the consultants make a pre-selection of suitable trainees and submit a tailor-made proposal to the company. [https://www.agv-bw.de/SWM/medien.nsf/gfx/992249E4A4D4CA7BC1257F5500233D7D/\\$file/Potenziale%20nutzen%20-%20geflichtete%20Menschen%20beschäftigen.pdf](https://www.agv-bw.de/SWM/medien.nsf/gfx/992249E4A4D4CA7BC1257F5500233D7D/$file/Potenziale%20nutzen%20-%20geflichtete%20Menschen%20beschäftigen.pdf), acquired on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.



Image: In January 2013, together with numerous actors, the students of the Heinrich-Heine-Gymnasium, were committed to ensure that Bitterfeld-Wolfen is the second city in Saxony-Anhalt to receive the title "The courageous city without racism".<sup>45</sup>



Image: The Online City Bitterfeld-Wolfen enables executives and entrepreneurs to present their company online and to sell products directly via the marketplace. This is made possible by the co-operation with a local taxi company.<sup>46</sup>

Regarding commercial services, we described in 2008, how in the future, there is a private service, which helps entrepreneurs in finding premises, in marketing, arranging gastronomy and sports services for employees and getting needed infrastructural support. Since November 2018, this has been true. The company Atalanda, in collaboration with the city, has provided a sales platform, linking customers and dealers, service providers, hotels, and restauranters together in Bitterfeld-Wolfen. The platform also supports local traders in finding new customers on the Internet and in marketing themselves better, combining online and offline business.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_s-cms/redaktionell/279/Stadt\\_ohne\\_Rassismus\\_Stadt\\_mit\\_Courage\\_/1632/Stadt\\_ohne\\_Rassismus\\_Stadt\\_mit\\_Courage\\_.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_s-cms/redaktionell/279/Stadt_ohne_Rassismus_Stadt_mit_Courage_/1632/Stadt_ohne_Rassismus_Stadt_mit_Courage_.html)

<sup>46</sup> Source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_s-cms/redaktionell/11/News/2496/Online\\_City\\_Bitterfeld\\_Wolfen\\_ist\\_gestartet.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_s-cms/redaktionell/11/News/2496/Online_City_Bitterfeld_Wolfen_ist_gestartet.html)

<sup>47</sup> <https://atalanda.com/bitterfeld-wolfen>

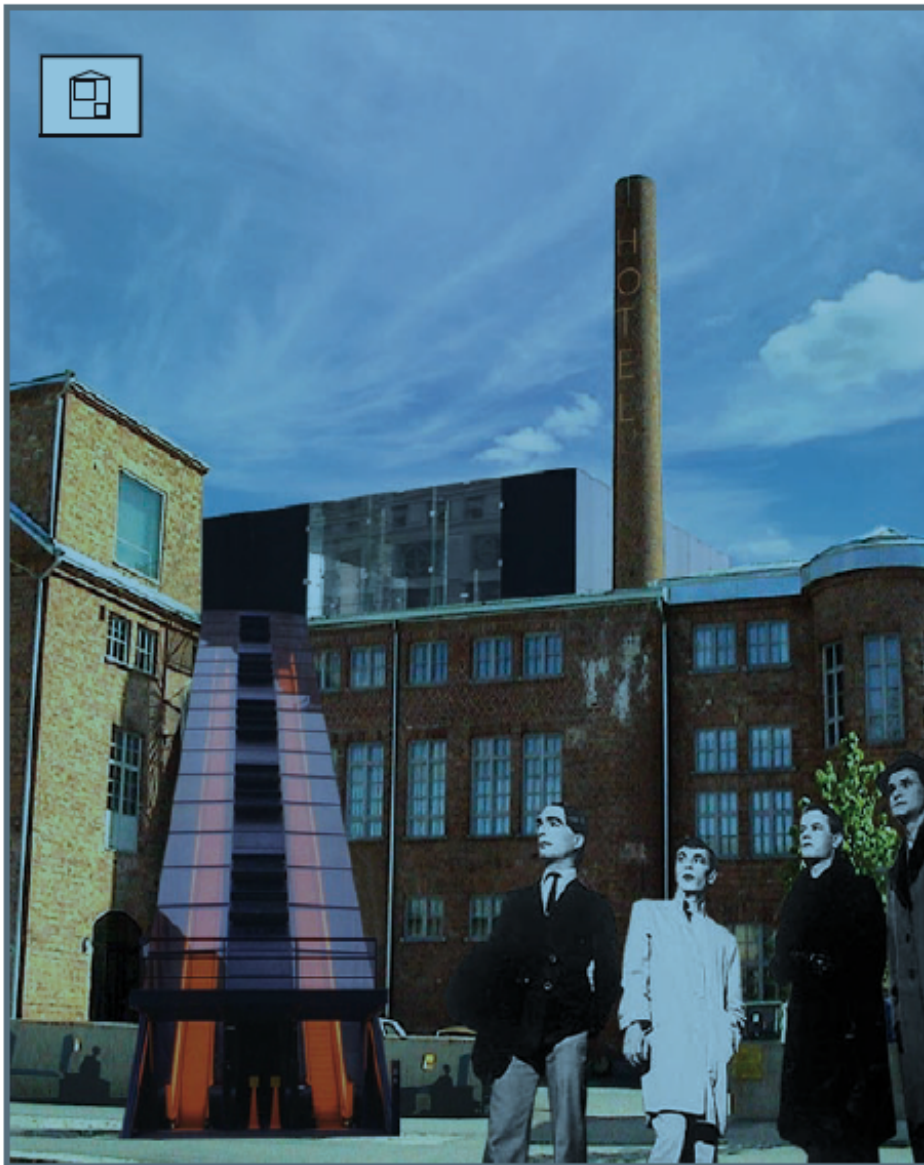




Image: *Betterfield* guidebook anticipated that Bitterfeld-Wolfen will develop its own heterogeneous gastronomic scene with cafés, restaurants and nightclubs. There have not been new nightclubs as far as we know, but the new "Campus Café" was opened on the 3rd September 2013 with great public interest. It is located at the head of the eastern side wing of the Town Hall complex and can be reached via the inner courtyard. The Campus Café corrects the previous lack of supply facilities at the town hall and at the same time takes a further step towards the revitalization of the area.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Image source: [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl\\_s-cms/redaktionell/251/News\\_Archiv\\_2013\\_archive\\_2013\\_/1079/Neues\\_Campus\\_Cafe\\_eroeffnet.html](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/wisl_s-cms/redaktionell/251/News_Archiv_2013_archive_2013_/1079/Neues_Campus_Cafe_eroeffnet.html)



### Die Obene Fabrik

These new hotels are made by modifying old Bitterfeldian buildings into something of an imaginative invasion. This is made inside and top of an old factory. You access the hotel by taking a blazing escalator from the street to a cube on the top of the building. The reception is on the top. There is also a fine restaurant with a view across the former industry area, now inhabited by

hundreds of *Kleingarten* villas. The factory also includes a library, a concert hall and loads of modifiable space for exhibitions. Most of the authentic industry milieu is being preserved in an original outfit, even the machines are still there.

Image: *Betterfield*.



Image: Betterfield.



## Conclusions

The catalytic outcome made by Helsinki University of Technology's Department of Architecture for IBA was an "utopian travel guide", for the future of the city – "Betterfield" as the city was renamed in this speculative prediction for the year 2020. The aftermath includes that the utopian *Betterfield* guide book was one of the many catalysts used in the process of trying to revitalise towns in Saxony-Anhalt during IBA Stadtumbau 2010 project. Compared to other vehicles for initiating progress, such as direct funding, community participation, and cross-sectoral real estate development, *Betterfield* wasn't that interactive in its book format, but created three types of catalytic strengths. It 1) pumped fuel to new local and regional communication and the culture of debate, 2) it described concrete, speculative, but plausible urban and architectural projects as aims for development, and 3) it emphasised taking into account integrative land economics, city planning, tourism, work, services and housing for the benefit of generating local attraction.

Rather than exuberant science fiction construction, we triggered, in our utopian travel guide book, catalysts and stimulations linking to local historic assets. The city still needs advisors, new ideas and new concepts for the development and we hope that also this article could be not just analysis of the past ten years but also a start for further collaboration.

If we consider those development directions, which have *not* become reality, one can discern the difficulty in predictive urban design in *timing changes right*. Many chains of effects have not been that fast as expected, including the city in 2020 to have flagship architecture, extensive green houses, varied services of hospitality and gastronomy, big scale landscape and recreation arteries connecting the towns and districts together, or having attracted a university unit – a powerful vehicle in urban development – to locate in the city. There is R&D-related industry collaboration going on in the Chemical Park with some universities from Saxony-Anhalt, but the universities are not really local magnets, which would attract students and researchers in remarkable scale.

There exists a lot of urban research and many successful realisations of utilising remarkable architecture or an university as a generator of attractivity in a city, as well as on the ability of great restaurants to drag visitors from far. However, the development of Bitterfeld-Wolfen shows how it is difficult for find investments to these cultural assets, compared to getting funding to improve roads or soil condition.

There has also been developments and emphasis in the city, which didn't show in the future guidebook. One is the extent of the disappearance of historic industrial buildings. These have largely been pulled down and not seen having strategic value.

"Network city" was not a term used consistently in the process of IBA 2010, but through the large-scale emphasis on local characteristics and local industries over Saxony-Anhalt, it was in practice the urbanistic model behind IBA 2010.

A network city is an optimistic answer to shrinkage. The shrinking of the population can be accepted, if the differentiating profile or the role of a node in the network city is not necessarily housing, but for example workplaces and tourism, as is the case with Bitterfeld-Wolfen. The economy of the city of Bitterfeld-Wolfen and the county of Bitterfeld-Anhalt will be dependent on EU and federal subsidies as long as it doesn't have enough taxpayers, but this is not necessarily problematic in the macro scale of economy, if the city creates enough fruitful business for the nation and the EU. In this sense, the interdependence of places in a network questions inhabitant-based urbanism.



Network city, as described in *Netzstadt – Designing the Urban*, by Oswald and Baccini (2003)<sup>49</sup>, was both a metaphor and a model: a way to perceive, analyse and interpret and a basic pattern of organization, intervention and planning of specific urban systems. In their description, dualisms such as city/country, nature/culture, local/regional are irrelevant to a new lifestyle that evolves, having been made possible by new efficient traffic connections. The new urbanity in a network city is characterized by massive flows of people, goods and information, which concentrate in the nodes of the net. The network connects landscape and cities especially in Saxony-Anhalt.

In a network city, cities and towns not only collaborate, but also compete with each other, if the network is based on efficient traffic connections, as is the case with Sachsen Anhalt. There is more choice for commuters and businesses. Even Berlin belongs to the commuting area of Bitterfeld-Wolfen, with the distance of 153 km —less than an hour with a fast car on a German Autobahns.

Bitterfeld-Wolfen – or the inseparable county of Bitterfeld-Anhalt, is a network city, where depending on the perspective and user groups, its borders and shape change. In network thinking, the in-between area – countryside – must be included in the plans. It lays outside the nodes of the network city, but the changing lifestyles – remote work, attraction to live in idyllic scenery and work elsewhere, recreation possibilities, village life, hobby gardens – have increased the attractiveness of these areas. The abundance for countryside and greenery inside a porous city structure can be seen as an asset for a workplace node such as Bitterfeld-Wolfen in this sense.

However, when the perspective is from within a city – such as Bitterfeld-Wolfen, the key discourse for understanding the identity of the place is hardly the network city, but the maintaining of the present characterisation and purpose to exist in the network. It is how to create new attraction for businesses, culture, recreation and inhabitants. It is feasible for the quality and growth of both business and housing, if they find local common characteristics to base on. Such existing attractors in Bitterfeld-Wolfen are the industrial heritage and the recreation possibilities, supporting the quality of life.

In the publication *Demography IBA*, Grelak and Pasternack conclude, that with IBA 2010, the substantive concentration of space has proved to be a very successful recipe in several cases. This concerns especially the *campus* projects – as they call functional sub-districts in cities – which have been implemented: the reunifications of different actirs and functions in an integrated place. In Sachsen-Anhalt, this type of places locate mostly in town centres. In comparison, IBA projects, which have not followed concentration, were largely characterised by a certain difficulty.<sup>50</sup> In Bitterfeld-Wolfen’s case, one can recognise campuses of industry. Based on the experience from other IBA 2010 cities, it would make sense to extend the campus thinking also to other fields, such as culture and services.

A network city challenges the notion of what a city is. If the requirements of a city still need a balanced distribution of housing, workplaces and services, the amalgamation of the sub-districts to become Bitterfeld-Wolfen was not wide enough, but a larger area in Sachsen-Anhalt could have been a city in the same way as Guangzhou in China is officially a such, even if it spans 7 500 km<sup>2</sup> with scattered urban conglomerations. Guangzhou is such a large area, that centred on Bitterfeld-Wolfen, its areal would cover also Leipzig, Halle, Dessau-Roslau and Wittenberg – as one city.

In the IBA 2010 concluding report, there was a wish that the towns in the network continue to collaborate, but not necessarily to unify. Bitterfeld-Wolfen shows anyway the benefits of unification.

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<sup>49</sup> Oswald; Baccini, (2003).

<sup>50</sup> Grelak and Pasternack, *Demography IBA* , Spatial planning 185/3-2016 47

There was also a hope to direct public development subsidies to the region, with a laconic expectation, that this cannot continue forever. –Perhaps it can? Bitterfeld-Wolfen’s population may still shrink, but, in the chosen path, as a remarkable node of workplaces in Saxony-Anhalt’s network city, it doesn’t necessarily need more inhabitants. Its subsidy-sustained economy still works<sup>51</sup>, giving back jobs and growing industries to the state.

What is then a post-shrunk city, such as Bitterfeld-Wolfen? –It is a city that has started growing, either to an anticipated and waited direction, or to a surprising one. It could also be content with shrinking, if the city’s functioning and the quality of its people’s life can be maintained.

From the perspective of ecology, a post-human, or “post-anthropocene”, post-shrunk city would be an area left by humans and occupied by nature. The geological eras, such as the present Anthropocene, take long, whileas the time span with our guide book was 10 years. The difficulty in urban prediction might indicate that while as the small urban catalysts can be realized quickly, perhaps the time span for remarkable changes in a city take rather 100, maybe 1000 or 10 000 years. In 100 years’ perspective, cities may grow and shrink. in 1 000 – 10 000 years’ scope, some perish, some new ones appear – many through wars – and along even longer time spans, climate and ha the most remarkable effects.

In past 10 years, Bitterfeld-Wolfen has managed to enhance the appeal of its environment and a sense of community has returned despite the declining population, concluding from the active innovation activities and social life. A post-shrunk city might also be a post-home city. It is therefore well-directed subsidies turned into well-placed investments, industry and tourism, which saved Bitterfeld-Wolfen.

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<sup>51</sup> [https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Statistischer\\_Jahresbericht\\_2019\\_-Teil\\_1.pdf](https://www.bitterfeld-wolfen.de/de/upload/Statistischer_Jahresbericht_2019_-Teil_1.pdf)

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