



Call for Applications Study Tour, 26 April – 5 May 2010

From Coal to Culture. The Ruhrgebiet in Transition

Organized by:

Marcus Funck, Ulrich Ufer, and Thomas Beschorner

The Canadian Centre for German and European Studies, York University, Le Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes, Université de Montréal, Universität Oldenburg



The illuminated World Cultural Heritage Site *Zeche Zollverein* in Essen at night.

Graduate students from across Canada and students from the University of Oldenburg are invited to apply for participation in an interdisciplinary ten-day study tour (26 April to 5 May 2010) to the Ruhr region—formerly the industrial heart of Germany, and in 2010 the European Capital of Culture. Supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), this program will provide unique first-hand insights in present-day Germany and exchange with international students.

The Ruhrgebiet includes cities like Duisburg, Oberhausen, Essen, Gelsenkirchen, Bochum, and Dortmund. Together they form one of the largest urban agglomerations in Europe, inhabited by some 5.3 million people. Once Europe's largest industrial region with coal-mining, iron and steel industries at its centre, the Ruhrgebiet went through a period of dramatic change and crisis since the 1960s. While initial responses to the decline of the old industries was mere denial, since the 1980s the structural changes were understood as an opportunity for fundamental economic, social, and cultural modernization. Increasingly, new high-tech industries, science labs, and centres of knowledge replaced the old mining pits and gigantic steel factories. In addition, cities throughout the Ruhrgebiet started to musealize their industrial heritage turning former mines and factories into attractive, sometimes breathtaking tourist sites. Nothing represents better the dramatic and sometimes astonishing changes than the fact that the city of Essen—representing the whole Ruhrgebiet—has been selected European Capital of Culture in 2010.

The Ruhrgebiet is considered today as a model for the radical economic, social, and cultural transformation of a formerly industrial region without denying its historical roots. The study tour will deal with the political, economic, social, and cultural implications of these secular changes and will try to assess the successes as well as the remaining problems and challenges. In order to get as many different perspectives as possible, the group will meet with individuals and institutions from a variety of backgrounds and interests. Amongst those we intend to speak with are politicians from the state, and municipal levels, representatives of private business and unions, academics, civic activists, urban experts, engineers, marketing strategists, artist etc.

We will particularly focus on the following inter-related themes:

1) Industrialization – De-Industrialization – Industrial Culture

Industrialization in the 19th and early 20th centuries as well as de-industrialization since the 1960s have been the driving forces of any structural development in the Ruhrgebiet. The economic, social, and cultural consequences of these processes will be assessed as well as the current reinvention of the Ruhrgebiet on the basis of industrial heritage.

2) Industrial and Post-Industrial Landscapes

Industrialization has shaped the urban landscape of the Ruhrgebiet. We will explore the very specific forms of urbanity resulting from this as well as present-day activities to revitalize or even to create urban centres. Also, the massive exploitation of natural resources has left a deep, sometimes disastrous impact on the environment. Since the 1980s (IBA Emscher Park) a series of “Landscape Parcs” have been created connecting pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial zones to a unique cultural and natural landscape.

3) Migration and Integration in Past and Present

Since its formation as Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhrgebiet saw a massive influx of Germans and non-Germans alike. Recently, the trend has been reversed, the Ruhrgebiet is losing population. The importance of migration in general will be explored as well as the mechanisms of integration and disintegration with a particular focus on migrants with a non-German background.

4) Regional Identity and the Challenges of Structural Changes

In the process of its formation as a region the Ruhrgebiet developed its own identity expressed in specific forms of labour relations, working-class associations, language and literature, culture, not least soccer. We'll take a closer look at the ongoing process of production of meaning and identity in the context of past and current challenges like industrial decline and globalization.

5) Towards a Knowledge Society: Science and Education

With the largest density of academic institutions in Europe, the Ruhrgebiet has become an enormous source of science and education. We'll explore the role of these institutions in the restructuring of cities and the entire region as well as the current challenges they are facing.



The “Yellow Wall”. South Stand in legendary Westfalenstadion (now Signal Iduna Park), home of football club Borussia Dortmund

Applicants

The Study Tour is open to all students currently enrolled in a graduate program at a Canadian university and for a selected number of students of the University of Oldenburg.

Workings languages during the study tour is English and German.

Generous funding from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) allows us to charge only a minor contribution of \$500 per Canadian participant to cover the costs incurred through transportation, accommodation, mobility within in Germany and the overall organization of the ten day programme. There are no costs for student of the University of Oldenburg; however, these students have to pay their travel expenses from Oldenburg to Essen and return. Meals will be participants' responsibility.

Successful applicants will be provided an extensive introductory reader and are obliged to prepare for the study tour as well as to participate in an online-seminar about four weeks ahead of the tour. Moreover, they will be asked to substantially contribute to the success of the tour by preparing a specific thematic module, serve as a facilitator in the respective activity during the tour, and contribute to some kind of joint publication. You are encouraged to contemplate any form of possible contribution (texts, photos, films etc.).

Please indicate in your application if you're seeking course credit for participating in the study tour and clarify the requirements with your home institutions well in advance before the tour.

The tour is a credited course in “Sustainability Economics and Management (Master)” and “Management Consulting (Master)” (Modules CSR and UGO) at Oldenburg University. In the selection process, priority will be given to students enrolled in these units.

How to Apply

Interested students from Oldenburg University are asked to submit a **letter of interest** outlining why they wish to participate (2 pages)

The deadline for applications is February, 15

Completed applications should be submitted electronically to the following addresses

Dr Thomas Beschorner, thomas.beschorner@uni-oldenburg.de

Please contact me also in case of questions about any aspect of the study tour.