

Scivit has moved to Zittau – join me exploring the area

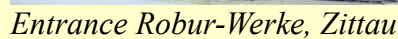


Zittau is a small town near the border triangle of Poland, Czech Republic and Germany

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Zittau is located at the very South-Eastern edge of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). Like a true microcosm the area displays many of the issues of the larger region. Since I am new to Zittau, this newsletter will not give an exhaustive account, but rather summarize some very obvious features and ask some very obvious questions. There is,



The map illustrates the Zittau region, a historical area spanning the borders of Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Zittau is centrally located in Germany. To the east, the border with Poland runs along the Spree river. To the south, the border with the Czech Republic is marked. The map includes numerous place names in both German and Czech, as well as icons for Zittau and Liberec.

Location	German Name	Czech Name
Germany	Zittau, Löbau, Bernstadt, Kottmar, Herrnhut, Ostritz, Neugersdorf, Rumburk, Varnsdorf, Olbersdorf, Jonsdorf, Oybin, Hradek nad Nisou, Chrastava, Liberec, Světlá pod Ještědem, Český Dub, Hlávče	-
Poland	Zawidów, Bulovka, Jindřichovice pod Smrkem, Nové Město pod Smrkem, Lázně Libverda, Hejnice	-
Czech Republic	Česká Kamenice, Chřibská, Krásná Lípa, Varnsdorf, Nový Bor, Cvikov, Jablonné v Podještědí, Stráž pod Ralskem, Mimoň, Zákupy, Česká Lípa, Janov nad Nisou, Jablonec nad Nisou	Česká Kamenice, Chřibská, Krásná Lípa, Varnsdorf, Nový Bor, Cvikov, Jablonné v Podještědí, Stráž pod Ralskem, Mimoň, Zákupy, Česká Lípa, Janov nad Nisou, Jablonec nad Nisou

Zittau and its surroundings (radius 30 km)



Border triangle Czech Republic-Poland-Germany

The Zittau area therefore not only reflects how effectively our societies cope with industrial devastation and the consequences of deindustrialization. It also reflects how good we are in coping with our violent past.

Borders and reconciliation?

Second world war started when Germany attacked Poland, shortly after it had occupied Czech Republic. The three countries bordering near Zittau represent the beginning of this murderous war. The border between Germany and Poland was shifted here as one of its



Lignite mining and power station near Bogatynia (Poland)

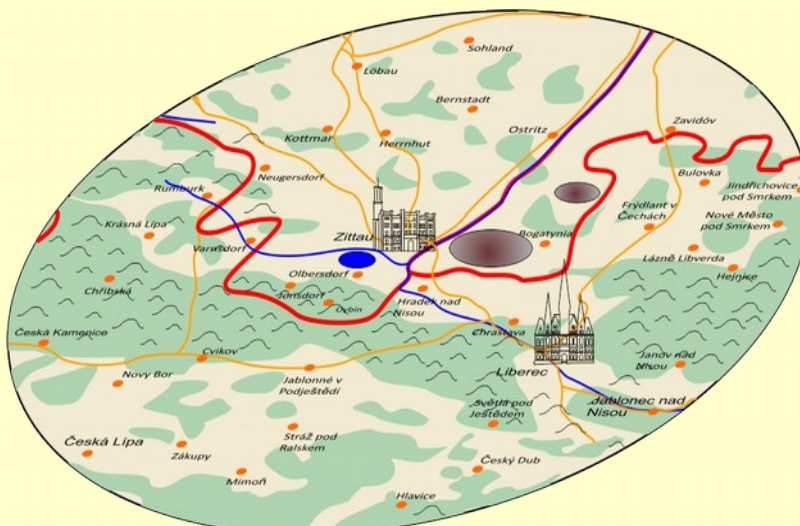
many consequences. It took many decades and memberships in the European Union until these borders could become „normal“ borders of today, where you can pass without controls. Crossing the border versus Liberec nowadays is as easy as crossing versus Strasbourg and cultural and linguistic diversity is a stimulating

element of the Zittau area. Nevertheless, German relations with the Czech Republic or Poland are not as settled as, for example, with France. Disregarding our violent history there are also clear differences in cultural, political and economic terms; differences which have to be kept in mind when considering regional trinational cooperations.

Economic reorientation in the wake of 1989

While I have no expertise in economic issues, economic problems have had such a strong impact in the past 30 years that they have to be mentioned at least: Since the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 all former members have been confronted by similar problems: They had to adapt their economies to completely new markets and conditions. Transformations were particularly painful, since the traditional focus of Warsaw Pact economies on industrial production suddenly became exposed to a global trend of deindustrialization. Reactions to these economic challenges differed markedly when comparing the former GDR with countries like Poland or the Czech Republic. One apparent consequence of these differences is a particularly prominent decline in population in the former GDR. Apart from such differences, however, economic reorientation is far from completed in all former Warsaw Pact countries and many regions still are looking for their future economic role.

Lignite mining



Lignite mining in the Zittau area: Active mines - brown, Olbersdorfer See - blue

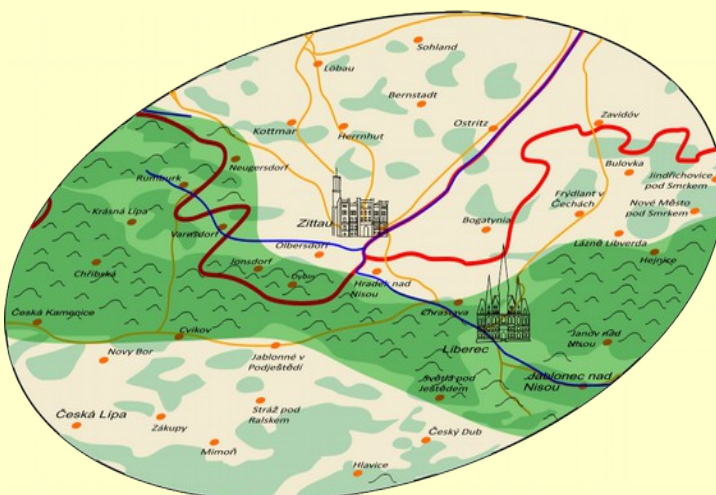
Lignite mining is a particularly devastating industrial activity and is widespread in the whole region. The Zittau area comprises active open pit mining on Polish territory together with multiple abandoned mines, sometimes transformed into recreational lakes like the „Olbersdorfer See“ on the German side.



Touristic railway in the Zittau mountains

Transformation of open mining pits into recreational lakes is a common approach and certainly has its benefits for the local population. But what is the long-term ecological impact? Is the diversification of landscape forms also translating into a higher diversity of plants and animals? Or does the new, disturbed habitat rather provide an efficient stepping stone for invasive species? Such questions impose themselves in an area with numerous active and historic open pit mining locations.

Mountain ranges and tourism



Distribution of (mostly forested) mountain ranges in the Zittau area

There are two major forms of landscape dominating the area: Hilly lowlands used primarily for agriculture to the North and South and wooded mountain ranges (Lusatian Mountains, Jizera Mountains) running from West to East in the central part. These mountain ranges are particularly attractive to tourism and provide the basis for the economic importance of this sector. Given



Mountain forest close to Zittau

the weakness in other economic sectors, development of tourism is a must. But how can this be done sustainably? Besides climate change and the invasion of alien species, tourism constitutes a major stress factor for nature. What are the combined effects of these stress factors in the Zittau area? Which habitats are particularly sensitive deserving particular care? Such questions are of interest for a very large region; as in the case of open pit mining, they suggest themselves in the Zittau area.

Legal disclosure/Impressum

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VAT-number/Steuer-Nummer: 231/218/02201

Ust.-ID gem. § 27a UStG: DE235829085

Person responsible for content in accordance with 55 Abs. 2 RStV / Inhaltlich Verantwortlicher gem. § 55 II RStV: Thomas Fester (Address see above/Anschrift siehe oben)