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Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte – A Unique Collection of Sources Documenting the History of East German Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection

1. Founding and subsequent development of the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte

The Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte, an archive for environmental history, was established in 1991 by the Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e. V. (Institute for environmental history and regional development, IUGR for short), in cooperation with the Bund für Natur und Umwelt¹. The Studienarchiv is unique within Germany for two reasons:

- There is no other collection of private gifts and bequests in Germany that documents East German environmental history so thoroughly. It covers the areas of environmental protection, environmental research and policy, nature conservation, regional history, land development, and the preservation of natural monuments.
- Also, it is the only collection of its kind operated by a private club and society (Verein).

The IUGR and the Studienarchiv were created after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1990. In this period of transition, many East German facilities and organizations were dissolved or restructured, often raising the question of what would happen to the

documents that had been published over the previous years and decades. The Studienarchiv was created to answer that question and save as many documents as possible from partial or complete destruction.

Since its founding, it has become the largest archive of private gifts and bequests containing material pertinent to the history of East German nature conservation and environmental protection. It currently holds the collections of 600 private individuals, organizations and groups that were active on a full-time or volunteer basis in the areas listed above. These individuals include:

- members of the Environment Library (Umweltbibliothek) Berlin,
- members of the Society for Nature and Environment (Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt), Friends of Nature and the Homeland (Natur- und Heimatfreunde), Society for the History of the Homeland (Gesellschaft für Heimatgeschichte) and Society for the Preservation of Historical Monuments (Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege) (all organizations of the Cultural Alliance/Kulturbund der DDR),
- researchers at the Academy of Agricultural Sciences (Akademie der Landwirtschaftswissenschaften der DDR) and one of its member

¹ The Bund für Natur und Umwelt e. V. (BNU) was created as a successor organization to the Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt im Kulturbund der DDR, which was dissolved in 1990. The Berlin branch of the BNU shared an office with the IUGR and was initially the legal owner of materials belonging to the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte. It was dissolved in 2001, at which point it transferred the Studienarchiv as well as its remaining assets to the IUGR.

organizations, the (Institute for Landscape Research and Nature Protection (Institut für Landschaftsforschung und Naturschutz);

- employees of water management departments and university institutes;
- and lastly many nature protection officers and helpers (Naturschutzbeauftragte and Naturschutzhelfer).

The number of people who have given documents to the Studienarchiv grows greater every year, evidence that its original purpose of preserving sources of landscape and environmental history continues to be met with approval.

2. Holdings of the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte

The Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte currently possesses an extensive library of 21,000 monographs and approximately 1,000 magazine and periodical titles (around 30,000 individual issues).

It also holds a substantial archive of additional materials, written and otherwise, stemming from approximately 400 different collections (compiled by individuals and groups). These materials measure 300 linear meters and include entire bequests (in some cases, quite large) from leading researchers, officials and activists.

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27. März 1981/1

Vormündliche Dienstsache			
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IV W/1	4	81	2
			1-140

Thema : 3. des Planes W/T
 Teilthema : 3.2. Bezirk Halle
 Aufgabe : 3.2.3. Aufgabe der Umweltbedingungen im Gebiet Bitterfeld-Wolfen und Vorschläge zur Durchführung von Maßnahmen
 F/F-Stelle: Institut für Wasserwirtschaft
 Bereich Umweltschutz
 Abteilung Territorientwicklung
 Standort Wittenberg

Figure 1: Document describing the environment conditions in Bitterfeld-Wolfen. (Source: StUG 141-3)

They cover the entire spectrum of activity in the areas listed above – from full-time, paid work to

volunteer and dissident activity – and stem primarily from the following periods:

- from 1945 to 1949: Soviet Occupation Zone,
- from 1949 to 1990: German Democratic Republic (GDR),
- from 1990 to the present: former states of the GDR only.

Taken as a whole, the archives form a comprehensive memory of all eastern German cultural landscapes (and of related problems and activities) from the perspective of nature conservation and environmental protection. These landscapes are of the following types:



Figure 2: Archives as memory of cultural landscapes. (Source: StUG 036)

- Agricultural landscapes, including the large wetlands shaped through land improvement measures targeting agricultural land (for example, Friedländer Große Wiese, Altmärkische Wische and Magdeburger Börde),
- Lake districts formed through agriculture, forestry and the use of land for recreational purposes (for example, the Mecklenburgische Seenlandschaft including Müritzgebiet and Kleinseenplatte); and hilly or mountainous terrain (for example, the Harz and Sächsische Schweiz),
- Coastal environments, with their varied uses (for example, Rügen, Darß, and Usedom),

- Landscapes molded by opencast lignite mining, including post-mining landscapes (Lauitzer Revier and Mitteldeutsches Revier),
- Industrial landscapes in central Germany that were a focus of environmental problems in the GDR (for example, Bitterfeld, Wolfen, and Schkopau),
- Urban areas with their specific ecological and socio-economic developments (Berlin, Halle-Leipzig and Dresden).



Figure 3: Poster „Protect and maintain our nature!“ (Source: StUG Collections P 015)

A large part of the Studienarchiv holdings were acquired with the aid of public funding and are available online and on-site for research purposes. The Studienarchiv is used regularly for research and teaching.

3. Significance of the holdings of the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte

Work on the history of East German nature conservation and environmental protection relies primarily on four sources:

- Publications in specialist literature,

- Holdings of the German Federal Archives, including official government documents as well as files belonging to the Cultural Alliance and its member societies (in particular the Friends of Nature and the Homeland and the Society for Nature and Environment, with their respective Central Specialist Committees). These latter files are located in the Federal Archives' Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR.
- Material held in regional or local museums and archives,
- Archives amassed by private individuals, organizations and groups, held in the IUGR's Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte.

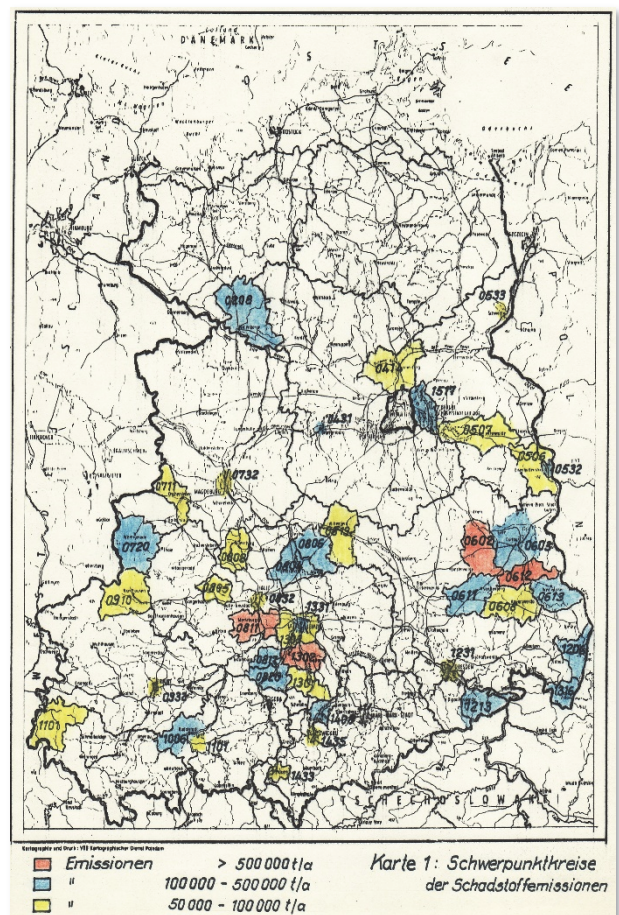


Figure 4: Map „Core areas of pollutant emissions“ (Source: StUG 141-3)

Apart from the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte, there is no other organization in Germany that works on the same scale to acquire documents belonging to private individuals from the GDR and the eastern states. The Studienarchiv thus constitutes an important resource for the history of East

German nature conservation and environmental protection.

The rarity of its holdings also sets the Studienarchiv apart from other archives. A great many of the materials preserved here are unique and cannot be found in other collections. This applies particularly to personal documents and to documents from the early, post-1945 years. In general, it must be assumed that a large part of the written records that could have provided information on East German environmental history has been (and continues to be) discarded. This is especially true of records belonging to private persons whose heirs either underestimate or do not understand the significance of the documents and the need to preserve them. In communicating with donors, it becomes apparent again and again how pleased they are that an organization like the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte has taken on the task of preserving and re-appraising these collections and the life stories of their collectors.

A further value of the Studienarchiv lies in its large collection of documents from many influential private individuals, exceeding that of any other archive in Germany. The Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte has emerged as a respected repository of East German environmental history, as shown by the large and growing number of its donors and their close ties with the IUGR and the Studienarchiv.

Another unique feature of the Studienarchiv is its dual character as library and archive. The library holds a large collection of gray literature that cannot be found in other libraries. It also possesses copies of virtually all relevant works published through more traditional channels in the GDR.

4. Acquisition, preservation and research

Work at the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte is not restricted to collecting and archiving alone. The IUGR conducts its own research on East German environmental protection, nature conservation, landscape history and environmental history, based on Studienarchiv materials. A host of symposia, conferences and publications (including 30 books) point to its active engagement with the

Studienarchiv holdings and related issues (see www.iugr.net).

In the course of its research, the IUGR seeks out actors involved in the events and activities of the time. In total, it has inspired over 500 people to put down their memories in writing, free of charge.



Figure 5: Collection of 28 biographical narratives by East German nature conservationists – see online: www.umwelt-hat-geschichte.de.

Some of the publications produced by the Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte are now considered core literature in their respective fields. A selection follows:

- A publication examining Germany's first institute for nature conservation: *Institut für Landschaftsforschung und Naturschutz Halle. Forschungsgeschichte des ersten deutschen Naturschutzinstituts* (Berlin, 2016)
- A collection of biographical narratives by East German nature conservationists: *Naturschutzgeschichte(n) – Lebenswege zwischen Ostsee-*

küste und Erzgebirge (Friedland 2013). This work was the result of an interview project.

- A three-volume work on environmental protection in the GDR, presenting in-depth analysis from a range of researchers and narratives written by contemporary actors: *Umweltschutz in der DDR. Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte* (Munich, 2007)
- A two-volume history of nature conservation in East Germany: *Naturschutz in den neuen Bundesländern – Ein Rückblick* (Berlin, 1998; second edition in 2002). These works provided key background information for an Enquete Commission of the German Bundestag on the official state party of the GDR (“Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur”).

Another large-scale, long-term project of the IUGR is a biographical encyclopedia on the lives and work of the *Naturschutzbeauftragte* (unpaid, government-appointed conservation officers). Four volumes have already been published (Vol. 1 for Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Vol. 2 for Saxony-Anhalt, Vol. 3 for Berlin and Brandenburg, and Vol. 4 for Thuringia); work on a fifth volume (for Saxony) is currently in progress. The authors interviewed large numbers of people involved in nature conservation in the GDR and eastern *Bundesländer* – between 60 and 90 people per *Bundesland*. These volumes contain over 1,200 short biographical sketches, covering all *Naturschutzbeauftragte* who worked in the eastern *Bundesländer* at state, municipal and local levels from the present time back to 1906 (when the State Office for the Preservation of Natural Monuments in Prussia was established, marking the start of public nature conservation). Thus they provide extensive information on the impact of a large group of key actors in nature conservation. Each

volume also contains a detailed look at the history of nature conservation in the respective *Bundesland*. These histories include many additional profiles of important conservationists from the GDR and modern-day eastern Germany.



Figure 6: A biographical encyclopedia on the lives and work of conservation officers.

The IUGR produces its own annual periodical, *Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte* (see 25 issues online: www.umwelt-hat-geschichte.de).

Selected Publications



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.),
Lutz Reichhoff, Uwe Wegener (Bearbeitung):

**ILN – Institut für Landschaftsforschung und Naturschutz Halle.
Forschungsgeschichte des ersten deutschen Naturschutzinstituts**

Steffen-Verlag Berlin 2016, 649 S.

ISBN 978-3-942477-10-9



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.), Hermann
Behrens (Bearbeitung):

**Lexikon der Naturschutzbeauftragten.
Band 4: Naturschutzgeschichte Thüringens**

Steffen-Verlag Friedland 2015. 772 S.

ISBN 978-3-95799-004-4



Arbeitskreis Wasserwirtschaft im Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regional-
entwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.), Wilhelm Thürnagel (Bearbeitung):

Trinkwasserversorgung und Abwasserbehandlung in der DDR

edition Lesezeichen Friedland 2014. 397 S.

ISBN 978-3-941681-74-3



Hermann Behrens und Jens Hoffmann (Hrsg.):

**Naturschutzgeschichte(n) – Lebenswege zwischen Ostseeküste und Erz-
gebirge**

Steffen-Verlag Friedland 2013. 564 S.

ISBN 978-3-942477-64-2



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.), Hermann
Behrens (Bearbeitung):

**Lexikon der Naturschutzbeauftragten. Band 3: Naturschutzgeschichte
und Naturschutzbeauftragte in Berlin und Brandenburg**

Steffen-Verlag Friedland 2010, 964 S.

ISBN 978-3-940101-83-9



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.), Hermann Behrens (Bearbeitung), Bernd Ziese (Mitarbeit):

**Lexikon der Naturschutzbeauftragten.
Band 1: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**

Steffen-Verlag Friedland 2007, 470 S.

ISBN 978-3-940101-03-6



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.), Hermann Behrens und Jens Hoffmann (Bearbeitung):

Umweltschutz in der DDR. Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte

oekom-Verlag München 2007, 1100 S.

ISBN 978-3-86581-059-5



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.), Hermann Behrens (Bearbeitung), Bernd Ziese (Mitarbeit):

**Lexikon der Naturschutzbeauftragten.
Band 2: Sachsen-Anhalt**

Steffen-Verlag Friedland 2006, 373 S.

ISBN 978-3-937669-93-9



Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.):

Naturschutz in den neuen Bundesländern. Ein Rückblick

2. verbesserte Auflage

Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung Berlin, 2002, 705 S.

ISBN 978-3-89700-312-5




Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung e.V. (Hrsg.):

Landschaft und Planung in den neuen Bundesländern. Rückblicke

Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung Berlin, 1999, 387 S.

ISBN 978-3-89700-069-5

For further information visit our homepage:
www.umwelt-hat-geschichte.de




Hochschule Neubrandenburg
University of Applied Sciences

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Projekte
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Umwelt hat Geschichte

Das Portal des Instituts für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung (IUGR e.V.) an der Hochschule Neubrandenburg




Umwelt hat Geschichte

Quellen aus dem Studienarchiv
Umweltgeschichte



Naturschutz hat Geschichte

Naturschutzgeschichte(n)
Ostdeutschlands von 1945 bis 1990



Landschaft hat Geschichte

Landschaftswandel in der
Mecklenburgischen Seenplatte

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