

**TO DO!99**  
**Contest Socially Responsible Tourism**

***Award Winner***

***LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE e.V.***  
***(LOAM + BRICK ROUTE)***

***The holiday region west of the Mecklenburg Lakeland area – an initiative of the FAL e.V., an association for the promotion of ecologico-economically appropriate lifestyles, Ganzlin***

represented by

**Klaus Hirrich, Manager of the FAL e.V. and Mayor of Gnevsdorf**

**Ingeborg Dietrich, Project Manager of the ZIEGELEI BENZIN Employment Society Ltd.**

**Gnevsdorf, District Parchim, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany**

**Rationale for the Award**

by

**Klaus Betz**

*“My first 50 employees all came from the Agricultural Production Co-operative (LPG), today they are timber traders.”*

*Mr. Mohr, a retired manager of a wholesale timber company who moved to Ganzlin from Kiel right after unification and also first chairman and longstanding advisor of FAL e.V.*

*“We are not able to support in every community three workers to collect leaves or to sweep the streets.”*

*Rolf Treu, director of the job centre branch in Lütz*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Investigations into the candidacy of the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE e.V. took place between November 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 1999. At the request of the Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V. (Institute for Tourism and Development) the data concerning the concept and objectives of the project as stated in the contest documents could be verified in situ without any problem – with the following result: The authorised appraiser proposes that the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE be awarded the TO DO!99 prize.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Looked at from a purely formal view the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE is a patented tourist holiday route supported by a promotional association. The route runs around the Lake of Plau in a westerly circle and touches the locations Ganzlin and Karbow leading up to the small town of Lütz (around 8,000 inhabitants). From there it takes the traveller via Barkow and Daschow to the small town of Plau (some 6,000 inhabitants) and back again to Ganzlin.

By car it takes not more than two hours to cover this parcours. In view of the themes offered, the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE, however, will keep the visitors occupied for a whole week. That is, if the tourist is interested in cultural history as well as in nature and ecology – in addition to being prepared to get involved with a socio-political “adventure”, that is an all-German “development project”. This is being successfully carried out exclusively by local actors who are implementing a number of ideas and innovations and who are making use of public funds in an exemplary way.

Something else must also be taken into account: Apart from the two urban agglomerations Lütz and Plau there are only small villages on either side of the route with around 1,000 residents each. This corresponds to a population density of 48 people to a square kilometre (the total area of the district of Parchim comprises 2,233 square kilometres). If one deducted the figures of the above mentioned urban centres, the population density would even drop to roughly 20 inhabitants per square kilometre. Unemployment fluctuates, depending on the season, between 18 and 23 percent; the regional planning authority has described this region as a “particularly economically underdeveloped area”.

In the GDR era (until 1989) the region of the present LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE has mainly been used agriculturally (agricultural combines). After unification – due to the agro-industrial mono-structure – the region virtually suffered economic breakdown. Resulting from this the unemployment rate soared. As almost everywhere in the new federal states, around 60 percent of jobs in agriculture and some 50 percent of jobs in the manufacturing sector were lost after unification. In view of this rapid negative development, the region was threatened with the migration of its population which would have caused a total lack of perspective for the region. In other words: After unification the regular labour market (the so-called “first labour-market”) was in a very rudimentary state. Therefore, the worst impact

could only be absorbed, to begin with, by a “second labour market” (employment societies and job creation measures).

In metaphorical terms the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE as it presents itself today can therefore be compared to a roof construction of a completely new house having been built over the last ten years. The walls supporting this new building, i.e. the “Regional Development” are made up of various employment societies and job-creation companies. The foundation was poured by several communities, companies, craftsmen, hotels, restaurants, associations, individuals and civil servants pondering and being committed to social development; this has finally led to a tightly woven conglomeration of enterprises creating jobs, with the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE being their common “roof”. But right at the beginning, when the construction of the house for “ecologico-economically appropriate lifestyles” began, nobody had thought of a tourist holiday route (to begin with).

### **3. THE TOURISM PROJECT LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE**

#### **3.1 HISTORY OF THE PROJECT**

The point of departure was the foundation in 1990 of the Association for the “Promotion of ecologico-economically appropriate lifestyles”, FAL e.V. This is an initiative which was implemented to begin with by individual citizens of Ganzlin and Gnevsdorf. Later on the communities of Ganzlin, Gnevsdorf, Tetzow, Wahlstorf and Wendisch-Priborn joined the FAL, in addition two church congregations, a number of individuals and various (newly founded) firms and entrepreneurs from these communities. Thus, a higher, democratically structured platform for communication was created where both regional problems as well as individual interests could be discussed – with the objective to strive for self-determined and sustainable development.

It must also be mentioned here – for a better political assessment – that the area of the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE has been regarded during the GDR era as an absolutely neglected and politically insignificant region. A number of critics of the then political system – those who did not want to leave the GDR – had “emigrated” to this region (temporarily as we know today). After unification dissidents from this very group, who had been “calmed-down” and observed by the state security of the GDR, had started the initiative to found FAL. This was also a chance for them to become active pragmatically, without having to consider ideologies, and in a non-partisan way and without being “blinkered” by post-unification “east-west antagonism”.

During the first years after the foundation of FAL, emphasis was put on job creation in the region, mainly through “job creation schemes“ in the so-called “green sector”. This meant: public works in the communities, nature conservation etc. But soon everybody involved realised that the problems in the region could not be solved with this kind of jobs. The solution, therefore, was to make use of the available qualification (in agriculture and trade) and to create new employment possibilities where these could be made use of. Emphasis was put on the sector “Ecological Building” especially with loam. In the initial phase special attention was given to protect and to maintain the existing fabric of the buildings in the villages so as to restore the people’s habitat. For this to happen one also needed BRICKS – which meant that the ZIELGELEI BENZIN (a company completely run down during the GDR era) had to be reopened again. This was turned into an “Employment Society Ltd.” and at the same time it was seen as a “technical monument in operation”. Apart from FAL, altogether twelve communities in the surrounding region as well as the towns of Lübz and Plau have made great efforts for the ZIELGELEI BENZIN to come into existence. This was the second important and supporting pillar in the development of “ecologico-economically appropriate lifestyles”. The present organisational structure was a result of this development, and this in

turn – right at the end of almost 10 years of development – led to the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE.

### 3.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The promotional association LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE is supported by a total of 46 members (from communes, private companies, associations and corporate bodies), but the motor and drive for all the activities and measures which can be observed are the following organisations:

The FAL, Ganzlin. This is a recognised establishment for education and employment in the Second Labour Market with about 130 people in job-creation schemes (or 766 persons, respectively, who have been gainfully employed in the course of 9 years). The FAL understands itself as a kind of development organisation and “think tank”.

The ZIEGELEI BENZIN (also active on the Second Labour Market with roughly 140 people in job-creation schemes) goes on to present “marketable products”. A case in point is the independent and privately run subsidiary LEHMKLUT GMBH, active as an ecological building contractor and producer of loam bricks and loam material. Which means that this company with its 16 employees is active in the First Labour market. At the same time the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE has got its administrative headquarters in the ZIEGELEI BENZIN, because it is planned in the long run to establish a kind of foundation centre there. And not forgetting BFE-SYNERGIE GMBH. This is a national educational establishment with its headquarters in Nuremberg, Germany; but one of its emphases in vocational training is with the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE. That is in Dachow, at the (training) hotel “Schloss Dachow”, offering training in the sector hotel and restaurant trade. There is also a “training kitchen” at the company’s own restaurant in the ZIEGELEI BENZIN. One of the objectives regarding the BFE activities is the training and retraining of young people, or young adults, respectively, for the profession of “skilled assistant in hotel and restaurant trade” with the certificate of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Presently, there are four classes with about 70 trainees.

One can better understand this floating network of employment and educational schemes in its interrelatedness by looking more closely into one single project of the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE . One of the best examples is the leased and privately run manor house “Gutshaus Klein Dammerow”. This guest house was renovated and saved from dilapidation by FAL employees working in a job-creation scheme. The special skills needed and the building material (loam and bricks) were provided by LEHMKLUT, with the bricks having been produced by the ZIEGELEI BENZIN. The partly antique furniture of the manor house was renovated by the FAL owned joiner’s workshop, the same goes for the metal works and for the newly developed reed bed sewage treatment plant for the house. Additional work such as electricity installations were carried out by member firms of the FAL (which are able to survive through such co-operations and which are therefore able to offer training places). The staff of the guesthouse responsible for food and service has also been trained through the BFE-SYNERGIE GMBH. In other words: Almost everything originates from the region, serves the region and remains in the region.

A similar procedure was followed with all the other measures that have been carried out during the development phase – prior to initiating the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE . Such as:

- The reconstruction of the “Ülepüle”, an old-style central German “hall house” (=Ernhaus, “Ern” is an ancient German word meaning entrance hall) in Retzow where local women run a linen and felt manufacture (two employees and 8 to 10 temporary

- workers). Felt is offered for sale, and visitors interested in the craft can attend courses to learn weaving, felting and dying with plants.
- The establishment of an information centre (loam construction) and the cultivation of an ecological “demonstration garden” in Wangelin, as well as the reconstruction of a boulder barn in Gnevsdorf and its present use as a “loam museum”.
  - The preservation of a large brick ensemble around the railway station of Ganzlin (headquarters of FAL) and the ecological training centre planned.
  - The redevelopment of the former (Russian) military training area in the sandy heathland of Retzow-Stepenitz and the resulting renaturation and conversion to the present nature reserve “Marienfließ”. The salvage and disposal of almost 50 tons of ammunition and ammunition scrap alone cost one million German Mark.
  - The systematic care and maintenance of the “head willow trees” typical for this landscape, with the waste from the rods being needed for the loam construction (for the lining/interlacing of the half-timbered construction).
  - The cultivation of almost 30,000 trees and hedge shrubs. Nearly everywhere along the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE can one find avenues of young poplars, birches and lime-trees. Small waterbodies have also been renatured and dry-stonewalls erected. With these measures the former (machine adapted) agricultural combine landscape could be re-shaped and its biodiversity enhanced.

These developments, starting from zero, were necessary (and only the most important points are mentioned here) to create some kind of lebensraum where “ecologico-economically appropriate lifestyles” could have a chance to develop. Since 1991 wages and material input of about 30 million Mark have been spent. This amount was made available through funds from the Federal Employment Services, the Social Ministry of the State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and various contributions of the EU (Leader II and Conver Programme). If one takes the achievements and results into account – and considering that all of these are now part of and owned by the communities – the 30 million Mark mentioned above is quite a modest sum. All the more so as jobs have been created and social welfare hardship case which would have been a burden to the communities, could be avoided.

### **3.3 OBJECTIVES**

Tourism here is not seen as the “magical formula” which might solve all the problems. Therefore, the objectives for the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE are rather modest. First of all it is intended to attract visitors who are spending their holidays at the Mecklenburg lakeland district as day visitors. After all, the region around the Lake of Plau (this lake is linked to the river Müritz via the lakes of Fleesen and Köplin) records some 400,000 overnight stays and some 125,000 visitors per year. This is the actual potential which one wants to tap. Special attention will also be given to bikers, to families, to people interested in environment and nature and in cultural history. In contrast to the “spectacular” lake landscape (swimming and boat tourism), the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE runs through a landscape full of “jewels” and small topics which all want to be discovered (with the help of excellent local guided tours). From this point of view travelling along the LEHM + BACKSTEIN-STRASSE is like a study tour presenting history brought to life; because one can easily comprehend what has been preserved and how one can shape a new habitat – if only there is the political will to implement such ideas.

## **4. TOURIST FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES**

Apart from boat excursions on the Lake of Plau or on the Elde-Müritz waterway, sightseeing tours are offered in the “gateways”, i.e. in the towns. Attractions in Plau are the medieval moat, the municipal church, the alder forest and its low-land moor, and in Lübz the municipal tower, the planetarium, boat excursions on the Elde and, finally the brewery.

From Ganzlin the route takes the visitor to the “Ülepüle” in Retzow mentioned above which can be visited either with a guided tour or without. There, they also offer workshops and one or two day seminars on topics such a felting, fulling or textile decoration.

Not far from here is the nature reserve “Marienfließ” offering guided tours in spring and summer on such topics as bird voices and blister beetles, or else (in June) hikes to places where one can observe the courtship display of swallows. On such guided tours the tourists learn about the ecological realities relevant to a sandy heathland.

The loam museum in Gnevsdorf illustrates the history and techniques of loam construction in different countries and cultures (including exhibitions on the famous loam capital of Sanaa in the Yemen). How this can be done in a modern way is demonstrated (was demonstrated) through the information centre built from loam next to the demonstration garden in the neighbouring town of Wangelin. (“was demonstrated” because at the end of October 1999 the architectural jewel was completely burnt out due to a technical defect and will only be rebuilt by mid 2000).

The adjacent demonstration garden of Wangelin is nevertheless an attraction in itself. With more than 900 different plants and species the 1.5 hectare tract of land represents an impressing didactic demonstration because it is a garden coping with various topics: There is among other things the garden with medicinal herbs, the garden full of fragrance plants, the butterfly garden, the garden of cunning plants etc. The women in charge also offer the products from the garden for sale so that these can also be perceived by the senses. Herbal oils and herbal tees, elderberry jelly, elderberry juice to mention but a few.

Finally, there is the ZIEGELEI BENZIN open to the public (in the foreseeable future) throughout the year – a “technical monument in operation” – which is presently prepared to be permanently open to the public (industrial tourism ). This is also the place where one of the much frequented festivals of the LEHM+BACKSTEIN-STRASSE takes place every year: the “fire festival” (in addition to the “stone” and “garden” festivals in Wangelin and Gnevsdorf, and the “heathland festival” in the nature reserve “Marienfließ”. A number of local artists are also offering some additional programmes. At the “Ülepüle”, the Swiss sculptor Claudia Amman for example created stone chairs made from erratic blocks together with tourists interested in this art. At the remote “Artist Resort Kuhwalk” the couple Götz and Sibylle Schallenberg offers courses in drawing, painting and graphic art; and there are a great number of well-run hotels and restaurants all along the LEHM+BACK-STEINSTRASSE, the majority of which are members of the holiday route which was started in the summer of 1999.

## **5. APPRAISAL OF THE PROJECT**

The comparison of the activities of the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE with the TO DO! criteria for a socially responsible tourism results in the following appraisal:

### **Contest criterion:**

#### **Involvement of the different interests and requirements of the local people through participation**

If one takes the development history and the membership structure of the LEHM + BACK-STEINSTRASSE as a measuring rod, then the project is organised in a highly participatory way and clearly oriented towards communal and regional policies. Participation of the

individual takes place at various levels. As decision-maker in the working group, as employee and as a (profiting) resident of the region. During his fact-finding tour the appraiser was able to observe the participation of different strata of the population in working group meetings which took place almost every evening. Mayor, hotel owner, restaurant operator, artist, pastor, environmentalist, employees of a job creation scheme, representatives of the association and expert civil servants came together, highly committed to their project.

**Contest criterion:**

**Strengthening the awareness among the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development in their everyday economic, social and cultural life**

Before the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE was opened to the public discussions in much frequented information sessions on the pros and cons of a tourist holiday resort had taken place. After the experience with the mono-structure "agriculture" care should be taken not to establish a new mono-culture by the name "tourism". Since all the activities, building plans, conversions etc. have been made transparent and have also not been dictated by "foreign investors", it was not so much the "dangers" that were highlighted but rather the "chances" – for a sustainable and self-determined development.

**Contest criterion:**

**Participation of a broad local population strata regarding the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism**

For the time being, this can only be roughly outlined since we are presently faced with still indirect effects which in this process cycle are interdependent and based one on the other, respectively.

Due to the fact that almost all the projects realised in the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE have been accomplished through the second labour market (job-creation schemes, employment societies) about 250 people have earned a fixed income per year. Purchasing power has thus remained in the region and the support has been earmarked for the region. The firms on the first labour market in turn were able to profit from this process. Existing jobs have become more stable (stable situation as to orders), new jobs have been created (take-over from people in employment schemes into the first labour market). From this perspective we describe a situation which will only experience the tourism relevant impact at a later stage.

**Contest criterion:**

**Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for the local people by improvement of working conditions in relation to payment, social security, working hours, education and training**

It is also too early to apply this criterion since we can so far not talk about massive existence of jobs in the tourism industry. At least not in the area of the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE.

The employment policy for the region will largely be determined and supported by the relevant Job Centre in Lübz. The minimum standard in terms of social security is guaranteed. The conclusion of employment contracts through the various firms and institutions mentioned above is based on existing bargaining agreements, thus preventing underpayment or low-wage effects. The same goes for training and capacity building measures.

**Contest criterion:****Reinforcement of the local culture as well as of the cultural identity of those living in tourism destination areas.**

In the final analysis “local culture” and/or local “cultural identity” is based on the distinction from other people, from other locations or regions. In this respect the stakeholders in the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE are just finding their way back to their roots. This includes the care and re-cultivation of an extensive landscape just as the rejuvenation of villages, i.e. the beautification of habitat – up to the yearly village festivals mentioned before. The theme LOAM + BRICK plays a decisive role since Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania was formerly characterised by 450 brickworks, making it to a real “brick-land”. Basically the newly founded LEHM+BACKSTEIN-STRASSE has reinforced this recollection and has thus probably triggered off the quest for identity.

**Contest criterion:****Avoidance or minimisation of social and cultural damage caused by tourism in destination areas**

Since this project is all about the “promotion of ecologico-economically appropriate lifestyles”, big tourism resorts in the area of the LEHM+BACKSTEINSTRASSE designed and decided from outside are and will be excluded. Instead, as described before, the projects designed are small, adjusted to the region, socially-responsible and environmentally compatible. Important in this context is that there is no competition to existing tourist facilities, but - and this is the unique feature – to come up with new, future-oriented and sustainable possibilities.

**Contest criterion:****Application of new methods in qualifying partnership and co-operation between the external tourism industry and the local people**

The LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE has just embarked on putting itself on the tourist map, in co-operation with the municipal Tourist Office in Plau and Lübz and with the tourism associations in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. For the time being everything is taking place on the basis of individual tourism. With the exception of a few tourist bus agencies there are so far no important tourist agencies familiar with the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE. But more than a year ago an expert consultant was found who will monitor the further development in the tourist sector as well as the marketing for the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE: the well-renowned BTE office in Berlin with its emphasis on “Regional Development and Tourism Consulting”.

**Contest criterion:****Creation of other favourable conditions for a socially responsible tourism development in destination areas**

These have been sufficiently described in the previous chapters on the organisational structure and objectives of the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE. It is in fact one of the most significant features that the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE is only one component of a holistically implemented regional development. Therefore tourism as a consequence of this process cannot be separated from the overall planning. All the activities have been designed to be compatible with socially responsible principles and they are all interlinked and interwoven with one another.

**Contest criterion:****Projects and measures entered for the contest must be in line with the principles of environmental compatibility**

Since the development of the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE is and has been the result of a continuous communication process (as described in working groups and committees) it is not surprising that almost all of the endeavours have been realised in an environmentally friendly way, often in direct consultation with the nature conservation authority of the district, the national Office for Environment and Nature in Lübz and the Federal Department for Nature Conservation in Bonn. These deliberations have always been helpful in the sense that they offered advice and ideas. What was expected in the end was after all a result which would be in line with the respective economic and ecological interests.

Care has for instance been taken that, when trees and hedges were cultivated, exclusively local plants or autochthonous plant material was used (ecology), which was then supplied by a regional nursery (economy), the latter being at the same time a member of the promotional association of the LEHM +BACKSTEINSTRASSE (identification).

In the case of complicated measures such as the waste disposal and the salvage of ammunition at the former military training area "Retzow Stepenitz" additional specialists from outside have of course been assigned with the task. Only when this was accomplished was it possible to start with the biotope formation and the conversion to the nature reserve "Marienfließ". The same went and still goes for such extraordinary measures as the water logging of the former Wangeliner Lake with the respective results. Just as in former times, cranes, red-neck divers, and snipes can now be found there.

**CONCLUSION:**

In the Federal Republic of Germany the above mentioned endeavour – purposefully pursued, conceived on a long-term basis and holistically designed – is quite probably unique. The ideas and projects realised have long gone beyond the stage of a socio-political experiment and, in the opinion of the appraiser, should serve as a model for Germany, especially because of their sustainable impact. The achievement realised for the community as a whole must be highly appreciated. The appraiser cannot imagine that a region or a cluster of communities in the west of the Republic might have achieved similar results – in the same initial situation. No wonder that the advertising slogan for the LEHM + BACKSTEINSTRASSE, meanwhile self-confidently formulated, is: "Audacious ideas for Mecklenburg."

There is nothing else to be said.