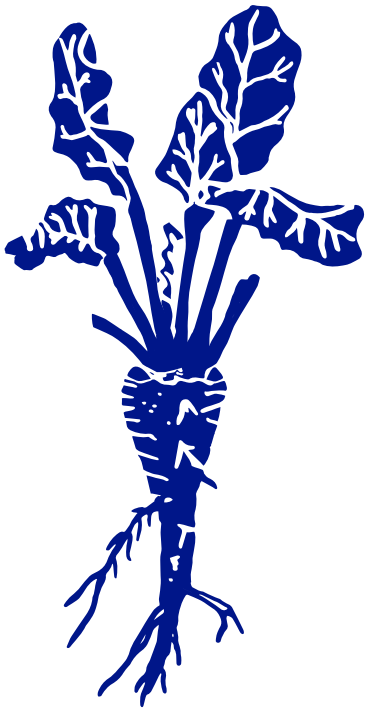
83 times Oderbruch

The most essential facts about our landscape



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About this booklet

The following short texts originate from our annual topics of 2016 — 2020. We do not raise any claims on their absolute, let alone everlasting, significance. They are an attempt to summarise the results of our research and surveys in the Oderbruch, which have yielded a fairly precise characterisation of the landscape, its residents and its cultural, geographical and economic distinctions as well as the changes it has undergone. Because of the interviews conducted by varying teams of researchers, including Kenneth Anders, Lars Fischer, Georg Weichardt, Tobias Hartmann, Pamela Kaethner, Katja Lehnert, Almut Undisz and Tina Veihelmann, a total of some 150 people have eventually contributed to these results. As we have come to see them as quite substanciated, we would like to present them here for you to take away. If you are interested in more detail, we recommend our theme books, which deal with our annual topics extensively and from a variety of perspectives.

Foto: Uli Seifert-Stühr

Water

I. History of water management

Earth history — The Oderbruch is part of the Thorn-Eberswalde glacial valley. It is shaped like a trough with a minimal slope towards the north-west. It used to be flooded by the River Oder every summer and winter. Back then, the water meandered across a floodplain densely covered in vegetation.

Prehistory — The first small dikes served to protect individual settlements. More were built in the 16th century to secure the trade route from Seelow to Küstrin, but many of them fell into decay in the wake of the Thirty Years' War.

The rise of Prussia — Agriculture started at the southern end and then spread across the plain. To offer safety, the Prussian king Frederick William I, in 1717, issued the first »Regulation on ponds and banks for the Lebusian plain by the River Oder«. In a report dated 1736, the hydraulic engineer Simon Leonhardt von Haerlem recommends accelerating the river's discharge, surrounding it with strong dikes and collecting and diverting the water from the lowlands.

The New Oder Canal — From 1747 to 1753, a tremendous effort is undertaken to trench through the Neuenhagen peninsula until Güstebiese in order to dig a canal for the navigable stream of the river (today's main branch). A modern agricultural landscape crops up between the dikes. Fishermen convert to farming, while farmers from many parts of Europe come to settle in new colonist villages.

Cutting off the Old Oder in 1832 (Cochius's scheme): — Despite the dikes surrounding the old river's branches, parts of the lowlands continue to be inundated, while the main stream is in danger of silting up. The melioration scheme developed in 1809 by Secret Senior Building Officer Friedrich August Cochius demands, among other things, the Coupierung (separation) of the Old Oder, which meets resistance, for instance in Wriezen. Nevertheless, the plan is implemented step by step.

Heuer's scheme — Due to the Oder's minimal slope, the lowlands are still threatened by backwater time and again. Senior Dike Inspector Carl Friedrich Theodor Heuer improves the situation by building the Hohensaaten shipping lock from 1849–59. The Hohensaatener Vorflutkanal (the later Hohensaaten-Friedrichsthaler Wasserstraße) relocates the junction of the Old Oder and the main stream to the north, making it possible to drain the Oderbruch more efficiently and over a larger area using its natural gradient.

Impoldering (Gerhardt's scheme): — In order to obtain better control of drainage in water-rich periods, the Oderbruch is split into summer (wet) and winter (dry) polders. Special pumping stations and dike sub-committees are to secure the technical and organisational operability of the scheme.

Special programme 1924 — 1928 — The system is still not working at its best, and many areas are waterlogged. As a consequence, groundwater levels are generally lowered, new drainage ditches are put in place and a clearer distinction between natural and artificial discharge is introduced.

Large-scale melioration — The collectivisation of agriculture in East Germany puts the focus on optimising field layout. As a consequence, from 1967 onwards, the entire water management system is put under scientific scrutiny. New drainage ditches are built, while some old ones are backfilled. Siphon pipes at Reitwein and Kienitz now enable directed irrigation of the fields in periods of drought.

Since 1991 — Today, as in the time before 1953, water management is partly an official function of the Brandenburg State Environmental Authority and partly controlled by a democratically elected, self-governing regional body, the Oderbruch Waters and Dike Committee. In a joint effort, they have developed an electronic hydrological control system for the Oderbruch. For the first time in the history of the region, a continuous equalisation of water flow is now possible at most low and high water levels.

II. Components of the water management system

Groynes direct the water flow into the middle of the river which, amongst other purposes, protects the dikes from being washed out.

Sediments carried along by the Oder are deposited in the bays between groynes at low water levels and washed out and transported further when the water is running high.

Dikes are artificial dams made of earth, sand and gravel which confine the course the water can take. They are founded on a (wider) bank and usually have a maintenance and flood defence road on the landside. A dense cover of grass protects the gravel from being washed out.

Seepage — While dikes can channel the flow of water on the surface, there is always some water that percolates into the polder below ground in accordance with the natural gradient. This is called seepage water.

Drainage — Seepage water is collected in ditches, canals and natural streams and then runs off from there. A parallel trench, running next to the dike base, immediately collects all water that seeps through the dike.

Surface pumping stations pump water from a certain area, which has previously been collected in ditches and led into a Mahlbusen (somewhat like a millpond), to a drainage system at a higher elevation from where it can then discharge.

Flood pumping stations are very powerful and are only turned on when the main Oder's level is so high that it threatens to push back water into the Oderbruch from the north. During these periods, they pump the water of the Old Oder downstream, thus forcing discharge from the Oderbruch.

Water feeders are pipes that conduct water from the main stream either straight through the dike along a natural gradient or over its crown using the siphon principle. Along with irrigation for agricultural purposes, this serves to keep the ditches intact when the water is low, since they get damaged if they dry out.

Weirs and dams hold back water where the gradient is steep because in the Oderbruch with its minimal slope stretching over 60 kilometres, every centimetre of descent is valuable. The Hohensaaten weir is of particular

importance. It ensures a constant level of the Hohensaaten-Friedrichsthaler Wasserstraße, which has no natural gradient, and prevents water pushing back from there into the Oderbruch.

The Hohensaaten-Friedrichsthaler Wasserstraße (formerly Hohensaatener Vorflutkanal) is a canal that facilitates water discharge from the Oderbruch using a semi-natural gradient. It provides a level descent of almost 2 metres. When the Oder is low, it ensures shipping between the Havel and Oder. Ships must pass two locks to descend to the canal.

Level gauges are devices to measure the water level. Electronic gauges as used today make it possible to let the water management system of the entire Oderbruch be run by a sophisticated electronic controller.

III. Flood disasters

Summer floods are caused by heavy rainfall in the Oder catchment area, mostly initiated by differences in air pressure in the summer atmosphere.

Winter floods are caused by thaw on frozen ground. Ice floes drifting in from the south accumulate in the river bed of the Oder, a process known as ice jamming.

1736 — A »huge midsummer flood« sweeps across the entire Oderbruch, causing several dikes to burst. Half of the village of Altwriezen is torn away. As a result, an epidemic breaks out, known as marsh fever, which takes 171 lives. The massive interventions by the Prussian crown from 1747 onwards can be understood as a response to this event.

1770 — Ice jams at the Krummer Ort in the New Oder Canal and in the old branch of the river near Oderberg cause the dikes to break in over thirty places. The failure of the dams is blamed on beavers allegedly burrowing into the dikes. Many residents, along with their livestock, have to leave their villages and seek shelter on the hills.

1785 — As a result of 23 dike breaches, 65 villages are flooded. Duke Leopold von Braunschweig drowns while trying to help people trapped by the

flood in Frankfurt. The damage to houses and infrastructure is considerable.

1830 — Following downpours in the Warta area, the flood defence systems in the Oderbruch are strained to the maximum. But the residents, having successfully built emergency dikes (including ones made of cow manure) also gain a positive experience from coping with this flood.

1838 — Enormous amounts of anchor ice in a stretch of the Oder near the Zäckericker Zollhaus lead to ice jams. In the middle of a spring storm, the dam gives way at three points near Alt-Lietzegöricke. Dikes also break by the Old Oder at Altranft and Schiffmühle, where the water washes out a bed for what is later to become Lake Bruchsee. Almost 8,000 lose their homes, but only a few die because the locals have already established a rigorous disaster management scheme.

1947 — A severe winter is followed by swift thaw. As a result of ice jams, water rises over the Oder dike north of Reitwein, which was damaged in the war. The flood, coming from the south, sweeps over the whole Oderbruch. Twenty people lose their lives and most of the crops are destroyed.

1982 — Heavy ice drift brings the Oderbruch to the brink of disaster. Its northern part depends on whether the eastern lock at Hohensaaten, behind which ice floes are piling up, will withstand. Icebreakers start operating on 12th January and reach Hohensaaten on 27th January. Instantly, the water level drops by two metres.

1997 — As a result of heavy summer rainfall, the so-called flood of the century kills more than 100 people in the Czech Republic and Poland. Parts of the Oderbruch are evacuated, but the locals, supported by armed forces of the Bundeswehr, brace themselves and prevent the region from being flooded after a dike breach. Since then, the »miracle of Hohenwutzen« has stood for the chance to avert disaster.

2010/2011 — Two heavy floods in a row, one in summer and one in winter, are coped with mainly due to prior renovation of the dikes and the successful deployment of icebreakers.

Photo: Uli Seifert-Stühr

Agriculture

I. Soils of the Oderbruch

Alluvial loam, a clay-bearing sediment deposited by the river during floods, covers a large part of the Oderbruch's surface. Its fertility provided the major incentive to drain the landscape. In contrast to the organic soils of the neighboring Randow lowlands, this type of soil can be cultivated sustainably.

Field depressions have developed from former streambeds and swamps. They are often waterlogged, which makes their cultivation very difficult.

Schrindstellen are dry, often somewhat elevated, sandy spots in the landscape which give lower yields than normal. They are missing the deposits of alluvial loam that make soils in the Oderbruch so fertile.

Minute soil — is a proverbial name for the soils of the Oderbruch, as they can only be tilled during a very short period of time when their humidity is just right. If the soil is too wet, it becomes slimy and sticky; if it's too dry, it hardens and cracks. The art of farming in the Oderbruch thus depends on waiting for the right moment.

Warmth and cold — In the 19th century, one Count Hacke praised the darkish-brown-black colour of the soil which, so he said, caught the sunrays early in the year and warmed up swiftly so that the seeds could quickly sprout. In fact, the great water storage capacity of the clay rather delays warming after the spring thaw but ensures reliable germination through constant moisture supply.

Area — In the Oderbruch, approximately 60,000 hectares are under cultivation, more than two thirds of its total area. This corresponds to a surface slightly larger than that of Lake Constance. However, development and sealing of soils constantly diminish the amount of arable land.

Field size — The Oderbruch has comparatively large fields, which simplifies cultivation. However, detached settlements scattered across the landscape and ditches running everywhere put a limit to the size of fields.

II. Product

Winter wheat is the main crop of the Oderbruch, thanks to the region's fertile soils. Many newcomers as well as those who got their land back from East German cooperatives have specialised in growing crops and given up animal farming. That way, they can cultivate larger areas with fewer people, which is also relevant for family farms. However, the crucial point is to comply with industry standards.

Maize is a good nitrogen utiliser and depends least on coordinated crop rotation. In the Oderbruch, its limits are set only by the climate. It is grown as animal fodder (silage) and, to a smaller extent, as grain maize for food. In addition, there is some use of maize in biogas plants to generate electricity.

The sugar beet used to be the proverbial crop of the Oderbruch. Due to changing markets and funding scenarios, it has become scarce and is now missing from most crop rotation schemes.

Rapeseed has also been a characteristic crop for a long time. However, it is increasingly losing profitability and is therefore becoming rarer. This in turn makes it more difficult to create a varied crop rotation.

Milk — Those who still keep dairy cows have to survive difficult times of low prices – so-called milk crises. Profitability issues are pushing for greater numbers of livestock. However, many farmers stick to milk production for as long as possible, as it enables more employment and improves material cycles on the farm.

Vegetables — Due to its heavy soils, the Oderbruch once was Berlin's vegetable garden. In fact, you can find cucumbers, tomatoes, fennel, salads, pumpkins, aubergines, sweet and hot peppers, many types of cabbage and even watermelons on the fields, as well as parsley, dill, savory, spinach, garden

rocket, chives, chervil and other herbs. Nevertheless, vegetables in the Oderbruch are more of a niche product and are mainly interesting for farmers who sell directly to consumers.

Sheep — The number of large sheep farms is falling steadily. Some produce cheese from sheep's or goat's milk and market it directly. Many locals also keep sheep for their own use.

Pigs — Pork prices are so low that pig fattening farms are more and more unlikely to survive, especially since modern practice requires almost exclusive use of purchased feed.

Poultry — farming has also become less significant. The remaining producers are highly specialized. Today, poultry keeping requires high numbers of birds to be efficient and adherence to very strict industry standards.

Photo: Oderbruchmuseum

Crafts

Basket weaver — Basketry is one of the oldest crafts. In the course of land drainage and increased agricultural production, there were periods when the need for farm baskets in the Oderbruch was so high that entire villages went to be basket makers. Legend has it that in the village of Sydowswiese, only two families were not in the trade. With the demise of East Germany and its command economy, which had ensured continued sales, basketry in the Oderbruch almost completely collapsed. Today there is only one furniture basket maker's workshop in the entire Oderbruch. Thea Müller, the last maker of white wickerwork, died in 2019. She left a museum with over 2000 baskets from all over the world in the village of Buschdorf.

Baker — Small countryside bakeries are usually family businesses, some of them in their third or fourth generation. Many recipes have been used unchanged for decades. However, there has been a lack of potential successors for several years. Committed baker apprentices are rare, because the work is still very physically demanding. It starts in the middle of the night, five or even six days a week, year in, year out. A self-employed baker should get by with a total of six hours of sleep spread over the day. That is why most bakeries close down when their owners retire. Today, the few remaining bakers in the region, apart from a lack of young talent, have another common problem: the industrial bread roll for 13 cents as sold in the supermarket. They can only rely on people making a conscious decision in favour of craftsmanship.

Roofer — Roofing is indispensable in our building culture. Consequently, we have quite a lot of roofing companies in the region. Despite improved technology, there are still dangers and difficulties associated with this craft. Roofers usually work in a hurry, at great heights, carrying heavy loads and in tense postures. In the debate about the statutory retirement age, reference is made again and again to roofers, whose work becomes difficult at an advanced age. Most of the roofing trade is about repair and renewal. Clay tiles are

characteristic of Brandenburg, but sheet metal, bitumen and concrete are also used. Traditional roofing materials in the Oderbruch were straw and reed. In the last few decades, materials and technologies have changed again, mainly due to the widespread use of attics as living spaces.

Butcher — Keeping one or two pigs, a few sheep or goats on your own farm and slaughtering them for your own use was part of everyday village life until the 1990s. A festive mood was often involved when the butcher came to the farm in the morning, killed the pig, cut it up and, after the meat inspection, went on to make sausage, supported by many helping hands. This culture is dying out today. The country butcher has to compete with the small-town supermarkets' meat counters and refrigerated shelves, which offer industrially produced goods hardly distinguishable in their taste. But here is also an opportunity for the butcher's trade: to slaughter animals bred locally, use individual recipes, create a distinctive taste and offer specialities, such as the Schmorwurst (braised sausage) in the Oderbruch. It remains to be seen whether these advantages will be sufficient for the trade to hold its ground.

Mason — There is still a lot of masonry work in the Oderbruch, but masons have become rarer. The demand for traditional techniques, such as English, Dutch and stretcher bonds, is still there, but apprenticeships in the main construction trades often remain vacant, and good applicants are rare. To be a builder above ground means »wind and weather, outside, inside, cold, warm, wet, dirty, loud and physically difficult work.« Only a few can endure these hardships until they reach retirement age. The market has changed as well. Construction and repair using traditional materials are labour-intensive and costly; prefab is often preferred. In the old days, lime and sand used to come from the region. There were clay pits everywhere, and many villages had their own brick kilns. Today the parts and materials are standardised, and international corporations dominate the market. That makes it easy to overlook the fact that good bricklayers are always needed.

Blacksmith and locksmith — The classic blacksmith, shuttling between fire and anvil, making tools and hardware, fitting wheel rims and forging weapons or knives, has long ceased to exist. The former alchemists of the farmstead now have to make a living as artisans or farriers. Horses' hooves will

always be shod. Horseshoes, although commercially available in all sizes and shapes, must regularly be customised on the spot. Meanwhile, the blacksmith has become a locksmith who earns his money in metal construction or lock and key service. But their fire has not yet completely gone out. When custom-made products and alterations come into play, being able to forge is an advantage, for example if the leaf of a hinge has to be rolled out by hand because the industrially prefabricated parts are too thin and weak, or if old ironwork must be restored.

Potter — Pottery is one of the oldest handicrafts. It established itself wherever there were clay deposits. In and around the Oderbruch, only brick clay can be found, as the big Hoffmann kiln in Altglietzen suggests. There were also quite a few outdoor brick-makers. Today, the Altglietzen building ceramics manufacturer Golem sources its clays on the market and can only survive in restoration. Pottery, as opposed to brick-making, is a comparatively young trade in the Oderbruch. It started in the 1970s when some ceramic artists, who were also qualified master potters, settled here. After 1989, others joined in. In the event, a wide range of artisanal pottery from the Oderbruch has established itself. Still, life as a self-employed potter is not easy. Because of the small number of walk-in customers, you have to offer your goods at markets almost every weekend. The profession of potter has officially ceased to exist in 2009. By now, there are only ceramists, whose training is focused on increasingly industrial production methods.

Carpenters and joiners — Carpenters rough-hew beams into shape and chisel out mortises. Joiners accurately cut their boards to mitre, sand them and fit them together to make windows and doors. Where the carpenter can allow for a centimetre more or less, the joiner cannot fit a sheet into the connection between parts. Carpentry is a main building trade, while joinery is considered subconstruction work. Anyone standing in front of one of the half-timbered houses still preserved in the Oderbruch can admire the quiet and accurate interaction of the two crafts. Framework, doors and windows including their shutters are all of a piece. Furniture also used to come with no frills. Today, the restoration of old buildings and furniture is keeping traditional techniques alive. When building new houses and furniture, carpenters and joiners are busy assembling prefabricated parts, rigging up formwork

for concrete pouring, erecting drywalls and making kitchen units and cupboards from fibreboard. The future of these trades lies in finding expert solutions to individual design tasks.

Saddler and upholsterer — In the past, these used to be one and the same profession, and today there are still craft businesses that offer both, but only upholstery has survived in the Oderbruch. With the disappearance of horses from everyday rural life, saddleries also vanished silently from the villages. Both professions are similar in that they use the beautiful material leather and require a certain imagination to produce two-dimensional cuts to fit three-dimensional objects. Of the twelve people in two companies who worked as upholsterers in Letschin in the East German era, there is only one person left now. This craft, too, is condemned to a niche existence by the industrial mass production of cheap furniture and is mainly kept alive by lovers of antique upholstery.

Auto mechanic — This job title still resonates with the sound of hammer and anvil, since many garages in the countryside emerged from village blacksmithies which took on new tasks after the vanishing of horses from agriculture and transport. Anyone who learns this profession today is more of a mechatronics engineer and half IT specialist who, before the actual repair, queries the on-board computer's fault log from a plug-in terminal. Nevertheless, most independent garages in rural areas can still repair anything that does not have a diagnostic socket, be it tractors, emergency power generators or lawnmowers. The question is whether independent businesses will also have to specialise in the future, as technology is becoming more and more fast-paced and the control systems of many vehicles will only be accessible to workshops authorised by the auto industry. As of now, they are still holding out.

Plumber and heating engineer — Plumbing has become a very technical profession, as the processing of modern materials requires a lot of special tools and machinery. Sophisticated electronics, changing standards and bureaucratic funding guidelines require a willingness to keep on learning. Nevertheless, the everyday life of a plumbing, heating and air conditioning installer – a rough translation of the modern German job title – is still physically very demanding. Heavy boilers have to be carried down basements stairs,

pipes have to be laid near floor level, which means in a kneeling position. Those who are fit enough to make it to the official retirement age are lucky. Good apprentices are hard to find, mostly only through personal contacts, and candidates are courted at schools and among friends. But prospects are good for the trade. The many companies in the region are always busy, and trips to major construction sites in Berlin have become rare.

Photo: Stefan Schick

Building culture

I. I. Settlement structures

The original villages of the Oderbruch are usually former fishers' settlements whose houses were arranged in a circle called Rundling. They were built on favourable, slightly elevated sites.

Colonist villages were founded after the drainage programme in the second half of the 18th century. Their houses are lined up along the road, and in the middle of the village there was usually a drainage ditch. Gardens were often located on the village green.

»Loose« farmsteads (pronounced low-se) developed in the so-called separation era in the 19th century, when land allocation was reviewed and consolidated. Those farmers whose fields were now far outside the village began to build detached farmhouses in the open landscape.

Large estates like the Domäne Wollup separate the mansions or seats of the domain administrators from the farm workers' houses and farm buildings.

Outlying estates have been built over and over again in the history of the Oderbruch. They were specialised branches of farms with integrated housing.

II. Buildings and construction

Gablefront hall houses of the Mark — Until well into the 18th century, farmhouses in the Oderbruch were laid out with the gable facing the street or the village centre. The Kossätenhaus in Altranft, built in 1698, is considered the oldest byre-dwelling of this type in the region.

Side-gabled or corridor houses — From the middle of the 18th century on, houses were more often built with their eaves facing the street. This allowed for a better arrangement of the small, medium and large properties in the

village. In addition, it improved access to the courtyard from the rear parts of the building.

Agricultural outbuildings — The end of the byre-dwelling era meant that separate stables and additional barns had to be built. Stand-alone dovecots were erected as a sign of prosperity. With regard to the number and arrangement of these buildings, three- and four-sided farmyards can be distinguished.

Churches — The great variety of churches in the Oderbruch ranges from small school and prayer houses in half-timbered construction to large urban brick buildings. They can be distinguished after their time of origin, size and type of construction. Many were destroyed in the Thirty Years' War or later in World War II.

Half-timbering — In the Oderbruch, half-timbered construction is still widespread today, as its wall structures maintain their stability even on swaying subsoil. The timber framework rests on a ring of sill beams laid out on a fieldstone plinth and consists of vertical posts and horizontal crossbars. The panels in between are called Gefache. They can be filled with plastered wickerwork or bricks both kilned and unkilned.

Brick houses or solid plastered construction — From 1860 on, many houses and stables were built from kilned bricks made of clay or clay-like material. To this day, the rule applies that if lime mortar is used without cement, these houses can cope with some ground settlement. Nevertheless, cracks can be found in almost all brick buildings in the Oderbruch.

Housing blocks — In some villages in the Oderbruch, e.g. in Neutrebbin or Letschin, typical East-German housing blocks catch the eye. They tell of a time when many people in the countryside were doing wage labour.

Single-family houses — In the 1950s and 60s, single-family homes were built on purpose in the course of settlement programmes. Today, new houses in the Oderbruch are only approved on selected sites, e.g. as infills. Only occasionally do they represent a regional building culture.

Modern agricultural premises — Agricultural construction uses industrial solutions today. In the future, however, it might regain importance for farmers in the Oderbruch region to think about the impact and bearing of their buildings on the landscape.

Photo: Stefan Schick

People

Schools still exist in Neuenhagen (Insel), Altreetz, Neutrebbin, Letschin, Golzow, Lebus, Manschnow and in the towns of Bad Freienwalde, Wriezen and Seelow. In the best of cases, locals take responsibility for their schools, and the schools, in turn, deal with their local environments in class. That way, schools become important social anchor points in the landscape.

Pubs used to be part of almost every village. Restaurants, cafés and tourist catering cannot replace them as points of day-to-day encounter and communication. Therefore, the last remaining pubs, for instance those in Neulietzegöricke and Kienitz, are very special places.

Churches — Not a lot of people go to church today, but many don't want to be without one in their village. They are indispensable as buildings where people can meet, express their hopes and worries, enjoy culture and celebrate important milestones in their lives. The variety of churches in the Oderbruch is really large.

Mayors and community representatives — The merging of villages into municipalities in the 1990s was a deep interference in local autonomy and came with conflicts and a loss of self-government. Since then, the mayors have only acted as moderators and speakers of village interests, while community representatives have to decide on the issues of the entire municipality. Meanwhile, there is even discussion about whether the municipalities can still manage themselves in the future or should be run as districts of the larger towns.

Wherever people gather in choirs, bands and theatre groups to make music or tread the boards, they create fellowship. Ensembles like the Manschnow Oderbruch Choir or the Märkisch Hoffnungsland Theatre make a contribution to ensuring that the Oderbruch villages do not fall silent.

The voluntary fire brigades are a small miracle of rural self-responsibility. Their comrades continue to learn and train in their free time, maintain their bases, run youth fire brigades, put out fires, rush to help in emergencies and help out in the villages wherever they are needed.

There have always been »newcomers« to the Oderbruch. Sometimes they get into arguments with the long-established locals, but mostly they bring new ideas and fresh energy with them and are ready to take on responsibility.

»Locals« — Families who have lived in the Oderbruch for generations often have a precise understanding of their landscape, but they usually don't make much fuss about it. But one can ask them.

Village fetes sare the most important opportunity for the Oderbruch villages to experience themselves as communities, since people now have very different professions and hardly ever work in their villages anymore. Almost every village has its own fete. People prepare them together and enjoy their joint achievements.

Sport always creates a feeling of community. Whether on the football field, riding horses or in the gym, sports clubs bring young and old together and ensure excitement, fun and quality of life.

Whether in a local history parlour or a village museum, the history of the landscape is important to many people. It is mostly the elderly who keep alive memories of former living conditions, of wars and floods and of influential fellow inhabitants. Here and there, e.g. In Neurüdnitz, Wuschewier or Altfriedland, younger people have also been getting involved recently.