Water Memory

Engaged tourism trail along the Masurian Canal

Located in former East Prussia and currently divided by Polish-Russian border, Masurian Canal was planned to end economical disproportions between the north and the south. It wasn’t however finished and the Canal succumbed to natural succession, where after 1945 many forgot about it as the locals had to flee and was replaced by migrants from Eastern Borderlands.

I am a member of the third generation of migrants to Recovered Territories and have no links to my birthplace, but research of the Canal was an experience that built my regional identity. I wanted to recreate it for other third-generation migrants. It is important to see the history of the Masurian Canal not as a history of the German nation that was to be eradicated in the Recovered Territories. History is a palimpsest and only treating our actions as another layer of it can lead to thoughtful solutions for heritage preservation.

Engaged tourism trail is to answer these issues. The engagement is a result of the difficulty of consecutive parts of the trail, that are marked by elements of narrative architecture. Their form is a dialogue with the infrastructure of the Masurian Canal – it is strange, sometimes out of scale and “unfinished”, but still revolving around forms and materials local to the region.

Although the primal idea was to recultivate the Canal, the research of its context indicated its high degree od natural succession to be its main potential. I would like for everyone to discover in these forest-hidden structures what I found in them, because that is what the Canal needs – an interest and care. No matter the plans for its recultivation, designed structures aren’t eternal and can be removed, or can succumb to the natural succession along with the Masurian Canal.

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