

THE CRUCIAL DECADE

RAG-STIFTUNG FUTURE STUDY

Ideas for the future of the Ruhr region
and additional spotlight on the Saarland



**International Delphi study on the future of
the Ruhr region and additional spotlight
on the former mining region in the Saarland**

Period under review 2015 – 2025



INTRODUCTION TO
THE RAG-STIFTUNG FUTURE STUDY
AND TO FUTURE THESES

The RAG-Stiftung Future Study manifests the RAG-Stiftung's aim to generate fresh ideas for the further development of the Ruhr and Saar mining regions.

To this end, 29 experts from the central thematic areas of business, politics, society, and education were interviewed in depth. The interviews were evaluated using the Delphi method in a multistage procedure. This gave rise to a total of 80 theses—some with very innovative approaches for retaining the high quality of life in the Ruhr and Saarland regions.

The 7 future theses form the communicative spearhead of the RAG-Stiftung Future Study. They condense the central findings into recommendations for action, particularly for the Ruhr region. Accordingly, the future theses can be seen as suggestions for the region's decision-makers as to how the area can return to its former strength under entirely new conditions.

→ When citing the study, please refer to it using its full name:
the RAG-Stiftung Future Study

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**OUR MISSION IS TO
PRESERVE THE RUHR AND
SAARLAND REGIONS
AS ATTRACTIVE AREAS
WITH A HIGH
STANDARD OF LIVING**

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We live in times of far-reaching global change. Phenomena such as globalization, digitization, and ecologization not only accelerate changes in the economy but also change the environments in which we live. In this connection, the attractiveness and positioning of urban areas is called into question anew. Reason enough to examine the opportunities and risks associated with change in the Ruhr region once again and in great depth.

Furthermore, the end of coal mining marks a turning point for the people of the Ruhr and Saar regions. A successful era of industrial history is coming to an end. Recent decades have seen major efforts by political representatives, business, and society to shape the structural change in the Ruhr and Saar regions along socially responsible lines.

PEOPLE NEED PROSPECTS FOR THEIR INDIVIDUAL FUTURES

The promise “No one will be left behind” has been kept a hundred thousand times. We have shown that it is possible to steadily reduce the number of people working in coal mining without leading to major social repercussions. That can be seen as a great success. However, the Ruhr region is still at a standstill in other areas. It is still not making sufficient use of its undeniable potential. New sectors have emerged, but not yet with sufficient potency to compensate for the loss of jobs in mining, mining suppliers, and other key industries. This area is home to the densest higher education landscape in Germany, but little of this knowledge is being transferred to the local economy. Or, to take an example that is very close to home for many people: While tenants in most German urban centers complain about high rents, there are still affordable homes everywhere in the Ruhr region. In spite

of this, people prefer to move to expensive large cities. This is because they are put off by the image of the Ruhr region as an area that has not yet come to terms with the decline of coal and steel and by the tarnished reputation of its cities. What these examples indicate is that young people in particular need prospects for their individual futures and are looking for a high quality of life. In this regard, other urban areas seem to have the advantage over the Ruhr region.

Cushioning the social effects of dwindling jobs is therefore not enough in itself—the responsibility does not end here. Rather, our mission is to preserve the Ruhr and Saarland regions as attractive areas with a high standard of living. Given its own roots, the RAG-Stiftung feels a particular challenge and responsibility in connection with the further development of the mining regions.

Although the long-term liabilities have absolute priority for the RAG-Stiftung, the foundation also sees itself as having a responsibility for providing new, workable ideas for regenerating the Ruhr and Saarland regions when German coal mining is discontinued at the end of 2018. All social forces must work together on this transformation. We at the RAG-Stiftung will also make a direct contribution with our own ideas and projects. This Future Study not only puts forward recommended courses of action for shaping the future of the former mining regions, but will also serve in the years to come as a conceptual framework for the activities of the RAG-Stiftung itself.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR
THE ACTIVITIES OF THE RAG-STIFTUNG
OVER THE NEXT YEARS**

With our Future Study, the RAG-Stiftung offers new ideas and approaches for regenerating the Ruhr region. Using 7 future theses, the study illustrates bold ways to regenerate the Ruhr region in the areas of business, politics, society, and education. The same goes for the development of the Saarland.

What is unique about this study is its perspective: Rather than taking local conditions as a starting point, it begins by zoning in on the trends towards extensive change in industrial urban areas worldwide. Only then does it draw considerations for the Ruhr region and denote lines of development.

My thanks go to all the experts whose input helped to put together a true picture of the Ruhr region. Their future projections are bold and exciting. At the same time, they are optimistic that the Ruhr region will forge ahead.

An important step in this regard is an intensive debate on the future of the former mining regions —with our Future Study, we would like to stimulate such a debate. We are happy to contribute our regional know-how to the debate and to put forward our ideas and concepts for discussion. The RAG-Stiftung aims to play its part in bringing about a sustainable improvement in the future perspectives for people in the Ruhr and Saar regions. I would like to extend a warm welcome to all those joining us in working towards this goal.



Dr. Werner Müller

Chairman of the Board of Executives of the RAG-Stiftung

1

**7 FUTURE
THESES FOR
REGENERATING THE
RUHR REGION**

7 FUTURE THESES FOR
REGENERATING THE
RUHR REGION THROUGH
BOLD MEASURES

The following 7 future theses fine-tune the findings of the RAG-Stiftung Future Study for the future development of the Ruhr region and indicate possible courses of action.
In this way, the RAG-Stiftung wishes to initiate a public debate about regenerating the area.
The findings also allow the RAG-Stiftung to establish an operational framework within which they can implement projects autonomously or in cooperation with local institutional sponsors.

The future theses were derived from the findings of numerous individual theses from the thematic areas of business, politics, society, and education.
In particular, these are based on theses that interact with other theses, thereby opening up a new perspective on a subject.

01

THE NEXT TEN YEARS ARE DECISIVE!

The Ruhr region is on the threshold of a vitally important decade: Globalization, digitization, demographic change, social polarization, and sizable integration challenges are all putting the Ruhr region under massive pressure to take action in order for the region to hold its own in the face of international competition.

02

ONLY COOPERATION WILL GIVE RISE TO VITALITY IN THE AREA!

The persisting competition between the various cities is paralyzing the Ruhr region and must finally be brought to an end. Only by bringing about a cooperation between the cities based on shared effort and by establishing a common profile as a clear unit will the area attain the strength and vitality it needs to be able to hold its own in the face of competition with other regions - both in Germany and internationally.

03

PROSPERITY NEEDS IMMIGRATION!

Immigration and integration can counter the problems of aging population and depopulation in the region and can stimulate the regional economy.

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04

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**THE RUHR REGION:
A FUTURE MAGNET FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION!**

The Ruhr region needs to present itself as a young region in order for its appeal to grow and for it to attract the young generation.

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05

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A CHARISMATIC BLEND OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY!

To maximize its appeal, the Ruhr region needs a future-viable model and a look that contrasts with the retrogressive symbols of coal and steel.

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06

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VITAL EDUCATION LANDSCAPE FOR SOCIAL STABILITY!

Education has the internal effect of countering the lack of social integration in a region and the external effect of increasing its attractiveness. To this end, the Ruhr region needs a broad education landscape including a number of high-profile institutes.

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07

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RE-INDUSTRIALIZATION ONLY WITH DIGITIZATION!

Digitization is revolutionizing the entire economy while opening up new market opportunities for entire regions at the same time. With its monumental industrial experience and great expertise in structural change, the Ruhr region can use this revolution for a new economic bloom and re-establish itself as a leading economic region.

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The gap between prosperous and economically weak urban areas is set to widen even further in the next ten years; at the same time, the pace of globalization is increasing. In this regard, several megatrends define the development of urban areas and have an increasingly great effect on the regions. This being the case, the next decade will be crucial in defining the fate of the Ruhr region.

Demographic change, digitization, and not least the growing social disparities and sizable integration challenges are all putting the Ruhr region—which is undergoing ongoing structural change—and similar urban areas under massive pressure to take action. The region's ability to overcome these challenges will determine whether it will be able to hold its own in the face of national and international competition in urban areas and whether it will be able to offer its citizens attractive prospects and a high standard of living.

→ Theses 01, 02, 03, 08, 10, 45, 48, 51, 52

02

ONLY COOPERATION WILL GIVE RISE TO VITALITY IN THE AREA!

The persisting competition between the various cities is paralyzing the Ruhr region and must finally be brought to an end. Only by bringing about a cooperation between the cities based on shared effort and by establishing a common profile as a clear unit will the area attain the strength and vitality it needs to be able to hold its own in the face of competition with other regions—both in Germany and internationally.

Modern polycentric urban areas are attractive and economically strong when their cities cooperate rather than compete with one another. Back in their glory days, competition between cities in the Ruhr region contributed to the growth and prosperity of the area as a whole. With growing global interdependence, however, the competition is taking place at the level of the urban areas.

Only when the cities of the Ruhr region abandon their polycentric competition and work together will the area stand a chance in the face of interregional competition. Concrete approaches in this regard include dividing up administrative functions, effective social teamwork on the part of all players, and sharing know-how about successful projects within the region. These measures will not only strengthen the region internally but will also add to its external appeal.

→ Theses 30, 34, 39, 40, 42

03

**PROSPERITY NEEDS
IMMIGRATION!**

**Immigration and integration
can counter the
problems of aging population
and depopulation
in the region and can stimulate
the regional economy.**

Immigration enriches aging societies, particularly when migrants have good professional qualifications or can be integrated easily in the labor market by means of high-quality education and training programs. When settling new migrants, specially developed enclaves (to give one example) can provide orientation and, through their openness towards other social groups, pave the way for successful integration. Immigration can do much to offset the negative effects of demographic change.

The Ruhr region must use immigration and integration as productive factors for facilitating future prosperity. Political leaders in the region are called upon to make full use of their administrative scope, resolutely and creatively. At the same time, the region's decision-makers must work to ensure that immigration is put at the top of the political, economic, and societal agenda.

→ Theses 45, 46, 47, 48

04

**THE RUHR REGION:
A FUTURE MAGNET FOR THE
YOUNG GENERATION!**

**The Ruhr region needs to
present itself as a young region
in order for its appeal to
grow and for it to attract the
young generation.**

The voice of the young generation must be taken into account to a greater extent in political decisions. This adds weight to the region's young image and ensures additional appeal far beyond the region itself.

Only when it succeeds in winning over young families and career starters by zoning in on their specific needs will the Ruhr region fare well in future international comparisons. Factors in their favor include attractive city life, a vibrant start-up landscape, and companies that are geared towards participation and active contributions.

→ Theses 04, 22, 28, 59

05

A CHARISMATIC BLEND OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY!

**To maximize its appeal,
the Ruhr region
needs a future-viable model
and a look that contrasts
with the retrogressive
symbols of coal and steel.**

Attractive urban areas show a profile that blends tradition and modernity effectively. They draw strength from symbols that confer identity and call to mind major development achievements. At the same time, however, they leave enough room for models which, in looks and substance, reflect modernity and the future with great confidence.

To be seen as a future region, the Ruhr region must therefore adopt a more forward-looking symbolism to go with that of the formerly dominant coal and steel. It needs a model for the future and new “icons” that highlight its underlying change, regeneration, and success.

→ Theses 36, 37, 38, 54, 55

06

**VITAL EDUCATION
LANDSCAPE FOR SOCIAL
STABILITY!**

Education has the internal effect of countering the lack of social integration in a region and the external effect of increasing its attractiveness. To this end, the Ruhr region needs a broad education landscape including a number of high-profile institutes.

The Ruhr region needs to build further on its existing vital education landscape. The education policy agenda is dominated by concepts for increasing participation by low-income population groups and migrants. These not only ensure equal opportunities but are also a crucial factor for reinvigorating the region's economy.

At a higher education level, elite institutions alone are not an indication of a vital education landscape. Urban areas draw their strength from diverse and networked know-how. Because of this, an attractive education program includes both elite universities and a dense network of universities and other higher education institutes working closely together.

→ Theses 30, 45, 60, 62

07

RE-INDUSTRIALIZATION ONLY WITH DIGITIZATION!

Digitization is revolutionizing the whole economy while opening up new market opportunities for entire regions at the same time. With its monumental industrial experience and great expertise in structural change, the Ruhr region can use this revolution for a new economic bloom and re-establish itself as a leading economic region.

Over the next years, digitization will already be turning entire sector structures on their heads as well as deciding the fate of entire regions and urban areas. The key here is for them to use technological innovations on a large industrial scale in order to shape their future as an economic region.

The Ruhr region is predestined for this like hardly any other region: It has the necessary industrial experience, expertise in structural change, and a growing research landscape. With the help of a digital agenda uniting all institutions and decision-makers in the region, the former coal and steel stronghold can take on this transformation challenge with confidence and pave the way for a new economic force. People in the Ruhr region must discover for themselves and understand the opportunities presented by digitization. Only then can the region really transform itself and become attractive again—and primed for the future.

→ Theses 08, 09, 10, 22, 24, 25, 31

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THE INDIVIDUAL FINDINGS

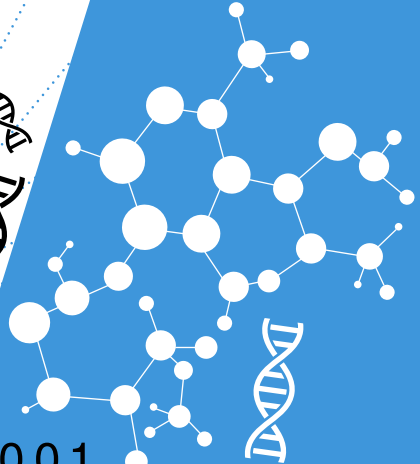
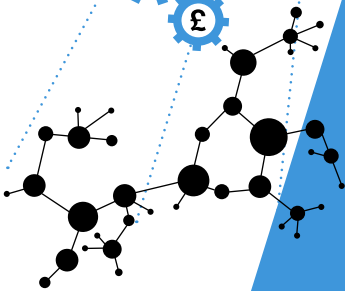
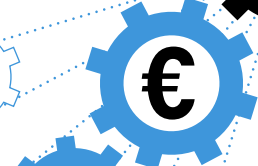
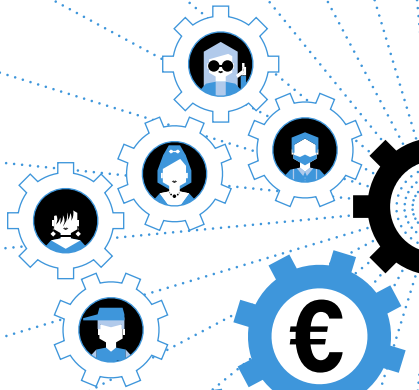
INTRODUCTORY
COMMENTS ON THE
STUDY SYNOPSES

Does digitization create or destroy jobs in urban areas? What influence is civic participation felt to have on the attractiveness of urban centers? And how will we organize integration in the future?

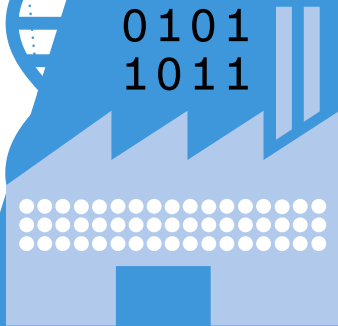
With the aid of 80 theses, the Future Study conducted by the RAG-Stiftung provides answers to urgent questions relating to the further development of the Ruhr region. The following synopses give an overview of the areas covered by the study. They are divided into 4 thematic areas: business, politics, society, and education.

The findings illustrate very clearly how experts from various disciplines envisage the future of attractive urban areas in general and in the Ruhr region in particular and what is required for a successful outcome.

Because the studies only look ten years into the future, the pressure for change that is outlined is often enormous. In the case of other thematic areas, developments can be observed that are just beginning now but which will soon gain momentum.



1001
0101
1101
0101
1011



POLITICS

SOCIETY

BUSINESS

EDUCATION

SYNOPSIS: BUSINESS

Globalization will continue to gain momentum in the decade to come. More and more economies will be participating in the international exchange of goods and services. Thanks to the internet, local service providers are already able to target customers all over the world. According to the experts, global service multinationals will emerge in the future, reaching billions of people with their services. This will bring about a massive change in the architecture of the overall economic structure in urban areas such as the Ruhr region.

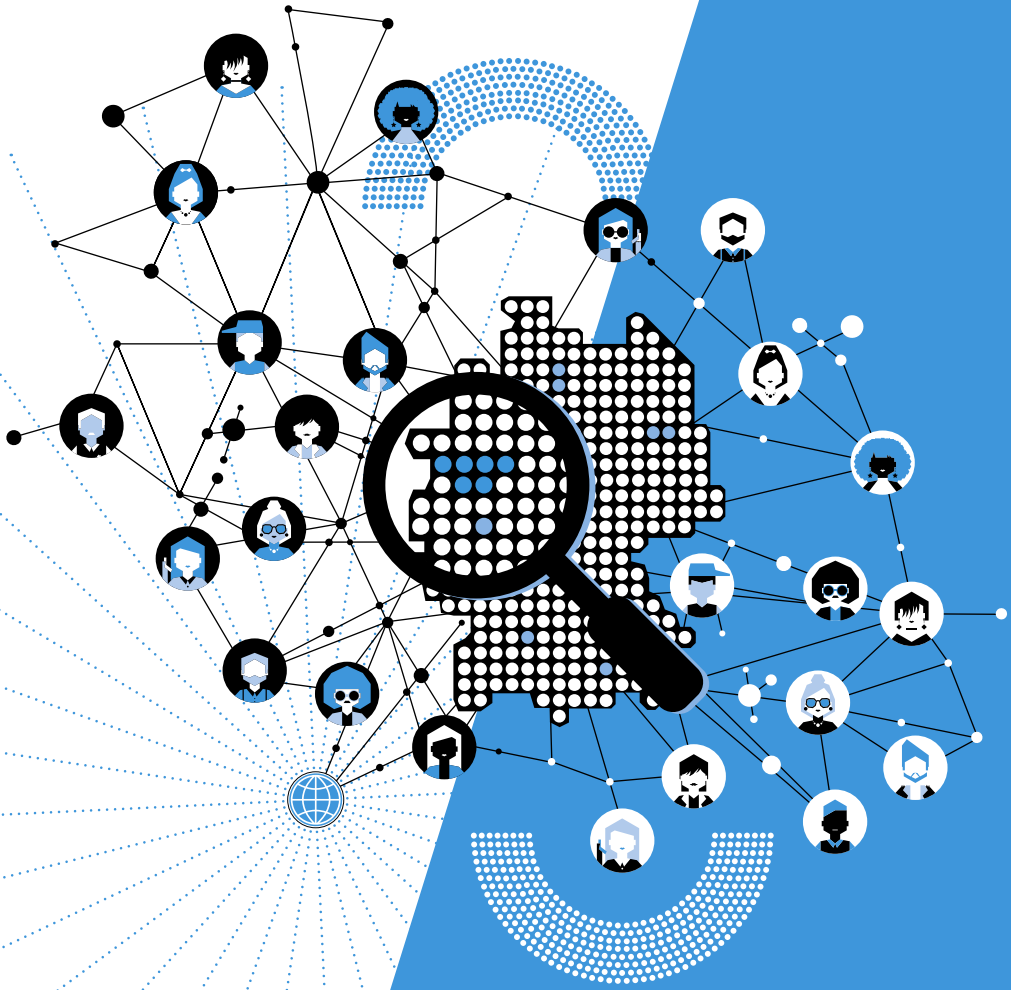
Digitization will conquer all sectors in its wake. In the next ten years, it is estimated that 70 percent of all sectors will already be affected by digitization. This expert viewpoint shows the sheer scale of the extensive change that will be wrought by the digital revolution in the Ruhr region as a significant industrial and services center. Whether the triumphant march of information technology will leave a surplus or deficit of jobs in its wake remains to be seen. One thing is sure, however: Although a solid apprenticeship or university education may have been the best insurance against unemployment to date, in future it will be ongoing training that will ensure compatibility with the constantly changing workplace profiles. For people in the Ruhr region, changing jobs, retraining, and phases of professional reorientation are becoming par for the course, with linear careers increasingly the exception rather than the rule.

The experts feel that it is impossible to envisage a future without industry for the Ruhr region in the foreseeable future. Although services will play a greater role than in the past, they will be successful above all in symbiosis with industrial companies, increasing the appeal and economic power of the region. In future, the key will be to generate a networked and dynamic response to the increasingly fast global economy and its increasingly short product life cycles. An economic structure with industrial core activities and SMEs is the most suited to this.

The experts believe that globalization and digitization—and a change in attitude among workers—will force trade unions to find a new direction. Especially in the case of the Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1997) and their predominantly post-materialistic outlook, financial aspects are no longer the dominant motivation. Even if wage policy does not become a side issue, the experts maintain that trade unions will need a second mainstay—namely the question of work quality, which is being addressed more and more by employee representatives.

The Ruhr region is an energy region. To this day, coal is not only mined here but also converted into electricity. According to the experts, coal mining will not only be phased out soon but the generation of electricity through coal will also lose much of its significance in the next ten years. In both Germany and internationally, the proportion of the energy mix represented by coal will fall as renewable energies make increasingly large contributions to generating electricity for households and companies. And the innovation potential of the technologies is by no means exhausted. Both with solar energy and other forms of green power generation, there is further potential for efficiency and improvement, meaning that coal-free energy supply can become a reality in the foreseeable future. As a result, nuclear power will not enjoy a resurgence—especially not in Germany. For the Ruhr region as an industrial urban area, the architecture of energy supply will change fundamentally—away from large power stations supplying cities and municipalities and towards decentralized grid feed-ins on the roofs of homes and energy storage systems in basements. In addition, intelligent electricity grids ensure constant supply reliability. In future, the quality of supply will be guaranteed at the same level as before the energy transition (i. e. the shift towards renewable and sustainable energy)—the only difference is that the energy will be increasingly green.

Successful urban areas are characterized by close ties with scientific research. In this regard, the experts feel that the Ruhr region has considerable ground to catch up on. Even though the area has a dense research landscape with many universities, universities of applied sciences and research institutes, cooperations with local companies are still thin on the ground. Similarly, “spin-offs” —i.e. company start-ups rooted in the university—are rare occurrences in the Ruhr region. Given the abundance of loose ends, the Ruhr region fails to develop the endogenous innovative capacity that it might be able to develop were its business and scientific elements to work more closely together. Responsibility for this can be attributed largely to the competitive polycentric structure, whereby communal scientific interest has priority over the interests of the region as a whole and higher education institutes see each other as competition rather than potential partners. This weakens the entire higher education landscape and renders it unattractive as a partner for regional companies. With a view to the future innovation of the region, the scientific institutes must therefore urgently set aside their competitive polycentric outlook.



POLITICS

SOCIETY

BUSINESS

EDUCATION

SYNOPSIS: POLITICS

In the Ruhr region, the vast majority of decisions are still taken from the perspective of the decision-makers' own city or municipality. According to the experts, the focus in future will have to be on the effects on the region as a whole. This is because competition will be subject to other rules in future. Rather than the individual cities competing for new company settlements and cultural attractions, the urban area as a unit will have to hold its own in the face of international competition for attractive locations.

Because of this, the experts call for the municipal administrations in the Ruhr region to leave behind their "backyard thinking". Rather than each municipality providing its own public services, the ideal means would be efficient cooperation between the cities in the urban area and sharing resources, for example when performing administrative tasks. Instead of keeping quiet about successful school projects, the newfound experience should be shared throughout the entire Ruhr region so that everyone can benefit from the innovative ideas.

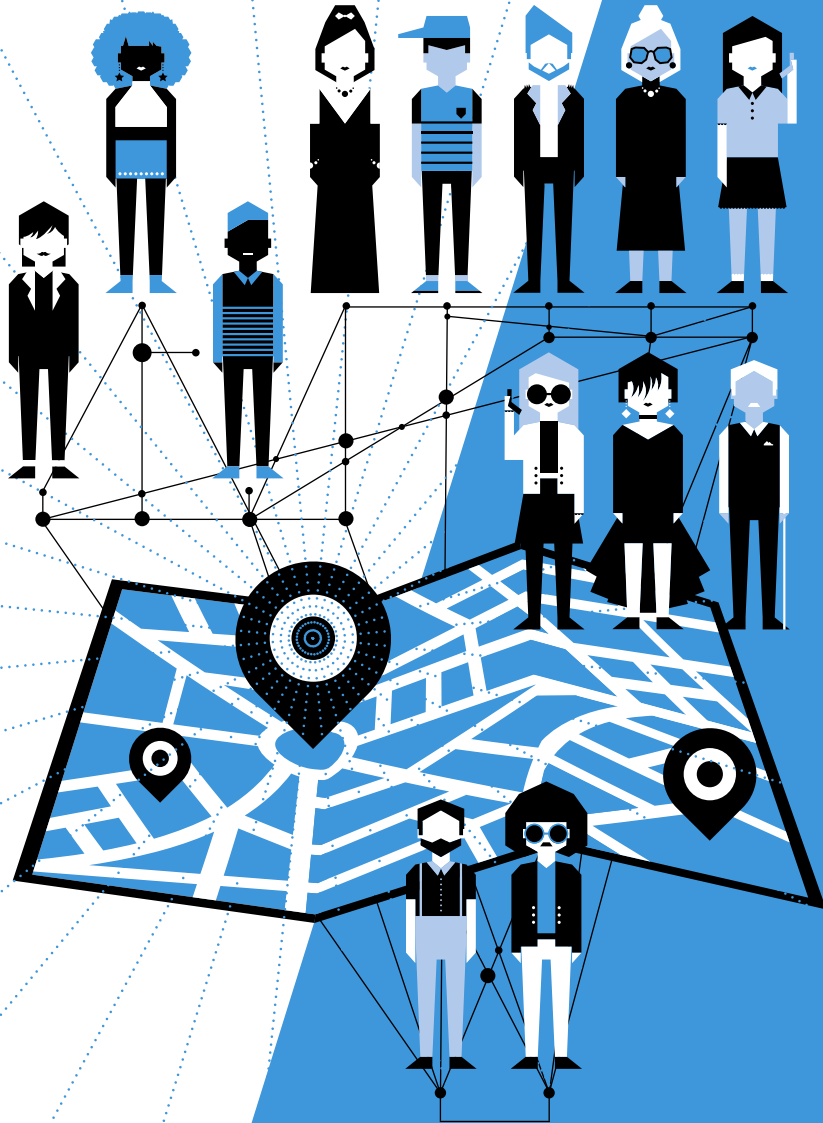
Most of the experts even go one step further: Why not abandon the city structure in the Ruhr region and see the region as one large metropolis instead—with an industrial and administrative district, a banking district and a nightlife district? For example, this could be modeled on Tokyo, a metropolis that is home to 30 million people and is not only one of the largest but also the most attractive urban areas in the world.

As regards both internal and external communication, some urban areas are also more advanced than the Ruhr region, which is still largely associated with coal and steel. Sectors that now only have a secondary importance for the region are still defining the identity of more than five million people. Accordingly, experts are calling for the Ruhr region to be given a new model with a modern, self-assured look. This model must zone in on the strengths of the region and its future ambitions—without disowning the successful era of coal and steel.

Profiling starts with existing factors. According to the experts, the Ruhr region needs to experiment much more in this regard. For example in economic policy, where the long-tried approach of responding to a shrinking major industry with a supposedly growing major industry continues to fall short of expectations. By contrast, the higher education institutions in the Ruhr region—with 250,000 students between them—have enough potential to initiate extensive start-up initiatives. This figure alone shows that many young people live and study in the Ruhr region. But the area does not have a young image, which is one of the reasons why its appeal lags behind that of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich. To counter this, experts recommend gearing political decisions more towards the interests of the younger generations. Political representatives must commit to the younger generation, offering them the options they need for personal fulfillment. In this point, the Ruhr region experts on the panel in particular are of one mind.

They feel that lack of funds is not an argument for limiting activities to merely preserving the status quo. It is a question of taking unconventional political steps and finding creative approaches that do not cost very much. Sometimes it is sufficient to borrow successful ideas from other cities or to draw more extensively on possibilities offered by public-private partnerships.

Whichever path is chosen for the future, it is vital to involve citizens. Those affected want to be involved in planning from the outset and to state their own interests. This is not primarily a question of preventing projects but rather of attaining better results, even if the decision-making process is initially found to be sluggish. The political representatives in urban areas and therefore also in the Ruhr region will have to get used to a new role, i. e. of no longer being the decision-maker but rather a moderator between interest groups.



POLITICS

SOCIETY

BUSINESS

EDUCATION

SYNOPSIS: SOCIETY

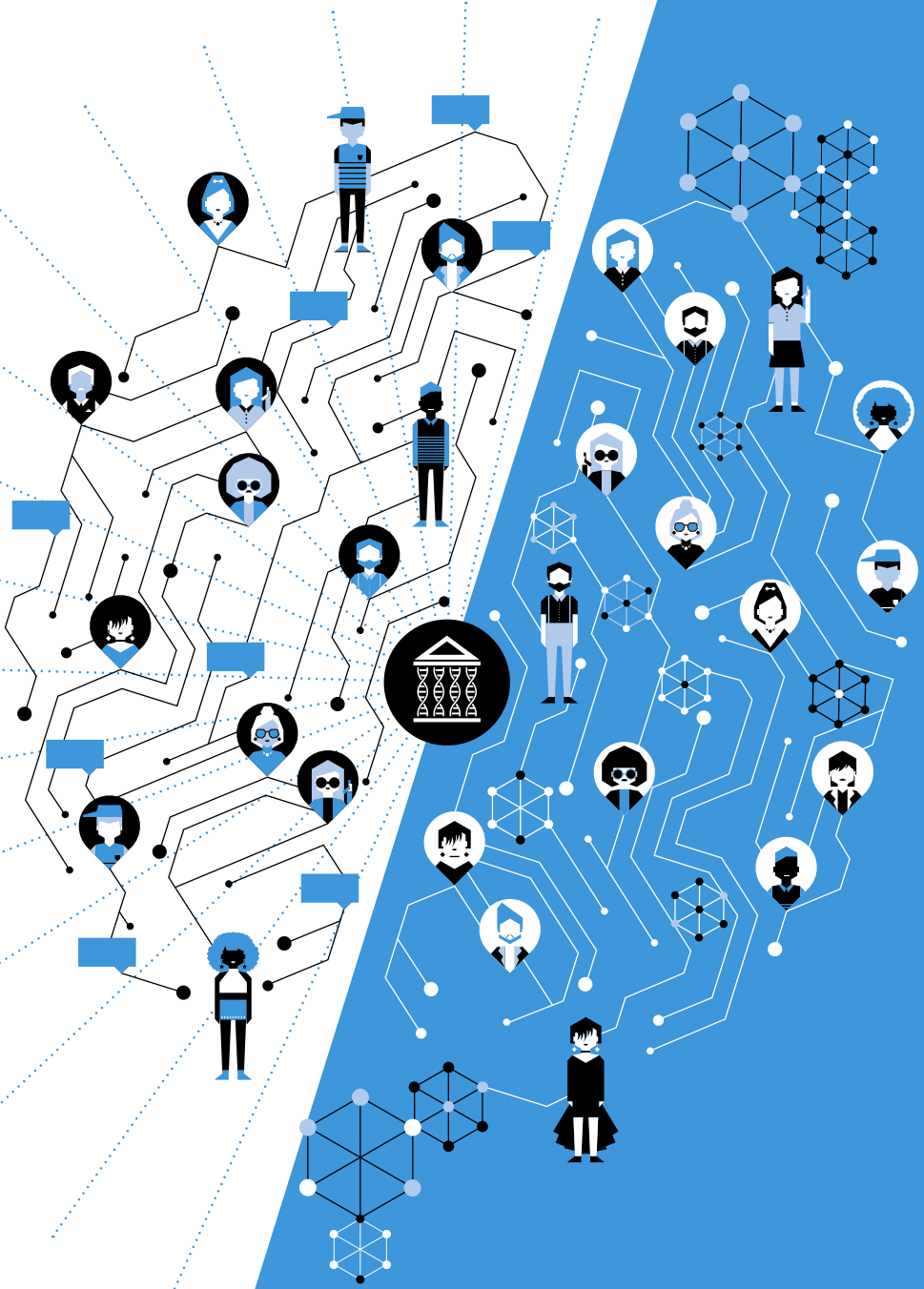
People are drawn to cities and urban areas. Since 2008, half of the world's population has lived in cities, a number that is expected to exceed 60 percent in 2030. According to the experts, it is in particular the prosperous urban areas and megacities with their urban living (or awareness of life) that exerts an attraction. As in other urban areas, the density of attractive centers will continue to increase in the Ruhr region. Because the boundaries between work and home are disappearing, geographic proximity to the workplace, for instance, is seen as an indication of high quality of life. The appeal of such areas increases when unattractive elements are removed—the experts feel that there is no point in “hanging on” to quarters without development prospects and simply watching them dilapidate. Rather, it is better to systematically demolish such quarters. In this way, space can be created for planning entire districts anew together with the citizens.

It is above all migrants from crisis regions that head for urban areas such as the Ruhr region to begin a new life there. The experts maintain that integration is a great opportunity for the Ruhr region—the largest urban area in Germany—to counter the problem of its aging society and to offset depopulation in the region. Accordingly, migrant integration will be the top priority on the political agenda in the next ten years. This means first and foremost getting people into employment—the experts feel that work is by far the best way to integrate migrants and make them part of society. Here, the Ruhr region does not fare so well compared with other urban areas, as unemployment is generally higher and the number of job opportunities lower. There is a risk that the growing competition for work will increase inequality and that an even wider gap will develop between the declining and the prosperous city districts within the region.

An urban area is attractive when it offers work. But that alone is not enough. Citizens also expect an attractive cityscape with contemporary architecture, well-kept green areas, and sights that generate an appeal beyond the urban area itself. Particularly in transformation regions such as the Ruhr region, these sights include industrial monuments. In addition to its cultural significance and its function in promoting tourism, it also helps to create an identity for a region. However, when promoting such a “culture of remembrance,” the experts point out that it is important not to focus too much on the building relics of past industrial eras. When it comes to regenerating a region, a modern look—drawing on the endogenous forces of the urban area—is just as important, if not more so.

Mobility will be assigned an important role—particularly public transport, which experts feel must be given a far higher priority in urban areas than expanding roads for cars and trucks. They feel that the Ruhr region has some catching up to do in this regard. Because a number of different transport associations and municipal transport authorities operate alongside rather than in tandem with one another, the quality of public transport in the region is compromised. According to experts, the only solution can be to create a joint transport association for the Ruhr region.

However, the need for mobility extends beyond public transport. Future indications of the quality of urban areas will include the extent to which air, rail, car, and bicycle travel are networked. Because this networking is still in its infancy everywhere, the experts feel that pushing ahead with plans to link long-distance routes and urban micromobility would offer the Ruhr region the opportunity to set itself apart from other urban areas.



POLITICS

SOCIETY

BUSINESS

EDUCATION

SYNOPSIS: EDUCATION

In spite of reforms, the German education system is geared towards the middle class. However, the proportion of children and young adults from a middle-class background in classrooms and lecture halls is becoming smaller. This is particularly the case in urban areas, including the Ruhr region. Here in particular, the diversity of nationalities and ethnic groups, religions, ideologies, and social backgrounds will increase greatly over the next years.

Accordingly, the experts believe that the Ruhr region needs educational programs that appeal to children and young adults irrespective of their cultural roots. In order to measure up to the social realities, particularly in schools, the region must use the educational policy leeway at its disposal. Above all, this is about increasing the motivation and involvement of migrants and members of lower social strata.

For the most part, schools in the Ruhr region are left to their own devices. The extent to which schools make use of their own freedom to adapt teaching curricula and lesson plans depends on the motivation of the school director and the individual teachers. For example, innovative schools make use of project-oriented learning because the lesson content can be understood better when seen in context. As well as this, 21st-century schools do not only define themselves as a place of learning, but also as meeting points in the districts. This creates social cohesion and facilitates integration.

There are already a number of isolated schools in the Ruhr region that use innovative approaches such as these to ensure equal opportunities among their students. However, the competition between the individual cities makes it difficult to share information about successful model projects and to “roll out” these approaches throughout the urban area as a whole. This means that the solution for a better school and education landscape in the Ruhr region would not even cost much: Interaction instead of demarcation, learning from one another, making successful concepts public and copying them—these are what the experts see as the right approaches for improving education in the Ruhr region.

Successful urban areas are characterized by a high level of education and great potential in terms of highly qualified specialists and managers. In developing its future, the Ruhr region can rely on a close-knit network of attractive, easy-to-reach higher education institutions in which young people can attain the qualifications that are needed locally. The education landscape of the future includes universities, universities of applied sciences and also online universities, which offer students access to university education without restrictions in time or place. It is less important to focus solely on one elite university with a high international profile. Even though a top university attracts renowned academics and increases the region's international character, the elite education that it provides is reserved for a small group of students and academics.

With regard to innovation, it is better for an urban area such as the Ruhr region for as many young people as possible to attain higher education. This is because, according to the experts, innovations no longer stem from the creativity of a single brilliant mind but rather from the interaction between many different specialists. Accordingly, with a view to enhancing the attractiveness and innovative capacity of the Ruhr region, it makes more sense to provide many young people with higher level education at universities or universities of applied sciences near them rather than focusing on a small number of graduates from an elite university. Nevertheless, the Ruhr University Bochum has great potential for joining the ranks of elite universities, for instance by expanding its additional "excellence programs." The approach currently taken with the Ruhr University Bochum as a university center and decentralized universities of applied sciences in every city is felt by the experts to be the right direction for education policy.

3

SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAARLAND



FACTS AND FIGURES

58 %
OF SCHOOLCHILDREN
LEARN FRENCH

BY 2043
FRENCH IS TO BE THE LINGUA FRANCA
TOGETHER WITH GERMAN

990,000
PEOPLE LIVE IN THE SAARLAND

THE SAARLAND COVERS A TOTAL AREA OF
2.600 KM²

PER CAPITA DEBT IS
€ 6,620

THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS
7.3 %

29,500
STUDENTS ARE REGISTERED AT
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES

376,000
PEOPLE ARE GAINFULLY EMPLOYED AND
SUBJECT TO SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS

THE SAARLAND

As part of its Future Study, the RAG-Stiftung also sought to focus on the prospects of the Saarland as a former coal mining region and to highlight ideas for development within the region—independent of the Delphi method. In October 2015, interviews were conducted with selected experts and their input summarized in the following report. These should be seen as ideas for possible initiatives and are by no means exhaustive.

MINING IN THE PAST, AUTOMOTIVE IN THE PRESENT, ECONOMIC DIVERSITY IN THE FUTURE

The experts' verdict: The economic policymakers in the Saarland should work to reduce its industrial dependency on a single sector and strive for a healthy mix of sectors instead. Retail, logistics, and the chemical industry form a very promising starting point given the region's good geographic location and specialist workforce.

For 250 years, mining played a central role in the Saarland, where it has a longer tradition than in the Ruhr region. At its peak in the 20th century, a total of 60,000 people were employed in mining and over 10,000 in steel, with more than half of all industrial jobs attributable to heavy industry. 2012 saw the closure of the last coal mine, the Saar mine.

Ore extraction is also a thing of the past, the importance of the steel industry having declined severely. Nonetheless, experts feel that the Saarland has taken the structural change in its stride better than the Ruhr region, a view that is corroborated by the numbers. Although unemployment is higher here than the German average, it is far lower than in the Ruhr region. Given its industrial experience, the economic future of the Saarland region is seen by the experts as lying in industrial core activities and industry-oriented services. In its settlement strategy, the Saarland's economic policy is essentially an industrial policy, an approach that is endorsed by the majority of the experts.

It is in particular thanks to the significant role of the automotive industry that the Saarland coped well with its exit from heavy industry. After the mines closed, many well-trained skilled workers from the mining sector found work at Ford in Saarlouis or any of the various automotive suppliers. The automotive sector in the Saarland, which is currently responsible for 45,000 jobs, has now reached the same level of dominance as heavy industry did in the 1960s. The new sector focus was very helpful in dealing with the structural change, but is itself not without risk in the long term. Firstly, the experts firmly believe that the automotive industry will have to adjust to new mobility concepts in which cars are no longer the sole point of focus. Secondly, the automotive sector is faced with the challenge of developing alternative drives, driver assistance systems, and autonomous driving technology. Unlike the development of the hybrid drive, prevailing opinion among the experts is that, for example, the development of the fuel-cell drive will bring about major upheaval, given that fuel cell cars require only a small number of mechanical components.

Good news for the Saarland: The drive towards electromobility and the development of fuel cells does not only stem from automotive manufacturers, but in many cases also from suppliers. This means that the strong presence of automotive suppliers in the region can be seen as a good sign for the future. The experts also see additional courses of action in Saarland University. This is the headquarters of the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI), which is playing a key role in research on autonomous driving technology.

“THE SAARLAND HAS 45,000 JOBS IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY,
AT FORD AND SUPPLIERS. ALL AREAS RELATING
TO THE FUTURE OF AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTION THEREFORE PLAY
A KEY ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEDERAL STATE.
THE SAARLAND DRAWS STRENGTH FROM AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTION,
BUT THIS HAS ALSO GIVEN RISE TO NEW DEPENDENCIES.”

Thomas Schuck

In spite of the good start made by the Saarland as regards riding the coming wave of change in the automotive industry, the experts feel that it is urgently necessary for the local economy to diversify. In their view, it is industrial SMEs that will determine the future of the Saarland. In this regard, the region can build on its vast experience from its mining days, i.e. as an industrial location. Local authorities are efficient in dealing with industrial companies, vocational schools are geared towards training skilled industrial workers, and the local population is used to shift work. These factors make the Saarland an

attractive proposition for industrial companies and providers of industrially oriented services looking for a place to settle – and the opportunities are being acted upon. In the eyes of the experts, the sector mix is in need of improvement. For instance, the chemical and pharmaceutical industry are underrepresented. This is in spite of the fact that the Saarland has a large pool of skilled workers active in these sectors but still commuting to jobs in the Rhineland-Palatinate or Rhine-Neckar regions.

“PARTICIPATION AND OPENNESS ARE IMPORTANT FOR
REGENERATION AND A SPIRIT OF OPTIMISM.
IN MY VIEW, IT IS ALSO NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH TRANSPARENCY
ABOUT THE ACTUAL SITUATION. THERE IS LITTLE SENSE
IN GLOSSING OVER NEGATIVE INFLUENCE FACTORS.”

Ulf Brandes

Generally speaking, the Saarland economy is heavily influenced by commuter flows. Every day, 25,000 commuters travel to the Saarland from France to work; of these, 20,000 are natives of Lorraine and 5,000 Saarlanders living in France. An important factor is not only its proximity to France but also to Luxembourg. Several thousand Saarlanders travel to jobs in Luxembourg every day, more than the number traveling to France. Many people also commute to neighboring federal states, driving as much as an hour and a half to the Rhine-Main and Rhine-Neckar regions. Although some of the Saarlanders earn their money outside their home region, it is there that they spend it. According to the experts, it is this bundling of purchasing power that makes the Saarland an interesting location for retailers, particularly since consumers also make their way from France and Luxembourg to take advantage of the cheap prices for food and clothing in Germany. Strengthening the retail sector could therefore also contribute to diversifying the economic structures in the Saarland. At the same time, the high commuter flow also harbors risks for the future development of the federal state: Although the Saarlanders are regarded as being very attached to their home region, experts believe that those who spend a lot of time commuting every day or at weekends will eventually settle down near their place of work. Accordingly, aside from the threat of demographic change, the Saarland is faced with another factor increasing depopulation that will have repercussions on the region’s consumption, cultural life, and attractiveness as a location for businesses.

One way that the experts feel might counter this negative development is by expanding the region’s function as an economic bridge between Germany and France. The experts see this as having two dimensions—a logistic and a strategic one: The Saarland has excellent motorway and rail connections and is an important trading hub between Germany and France. Inland waterway transport, which used to serve heavy industry primarily, continues to be of great importance. While coal ships used to sail along the

River Saar, container ships now travel between Saarbrücken and Rotterdam. This allows companies in the Saarland and in Lorraine a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way of transporting their goods worldwide. Experts see a great future opportunity for the Saarland in expanding logistics possibilities through new cargo handling centers and improved trimodal connections. Even leaving aside the pragmatic logistics aspect, the Saarland has a bridge function: In an optimistic future projection, the experts point to the Saarland as the point of focus for business ties between Germany and France. This internationalization could also be instrumental in establishing a wider basis for the Saarland's economy. Tying in with this is the region's educational "France Strategy" of introducing bilingualism by the year 2043.

Experts feel that the fact that Saarlanders have largely succeeded in leaving behind the coal and steel mentality will help them to usher in a new diversity. They also believe that this is a result of open communication. In this way, the Saarland population were even able to see a positive side to the decision to exit coal mining quickly, thus avoiding a possible period of uncertainty dragging on for decades. The mining tradition still lives on in the Saarland even though the mines have closed, but this is far from being a glorification of the "good old days."

AT A GLANCE

The Saarland economy

The majority of the estimated 376,000 gainfully employed people subject to social security contributions work in producing areas including agriculture (124,000 people), followed by retail/hospitality/transport, etc. (78,000 people), and healthcare/social services (57,000 people). Tourism also makes an important contribution to the economy, with 1.38 million overnight stays by visitors in the first half of 2015. Unemployment in the Saarland was measured at 7.3 percent in August 2015, which is somewhat higher than the national average (6.4 percent) but far lower than in the Ruhr region (10.7 percent). Youth unemployment (15 to 24 years) is slightly above the average figure for Germany as a whole (7.0 and 6.2 percent respectively in August 2015) but is significantly lower than in the Ruhr region (9.4 percent in September 2014). There are close business ties with France: 12 to 15 percent of the Saarland's volume of external trade in the first half of 2015 can be attributed to France, compared to 9 percent for Germany as a whole.

MORE EXPERIMENTATION NEEDED!

The experts' verdict: The Saarland should tap into the dynamic from its France Strategy and use the interface function between Germany and France to an even greater extent in order to profile itself as a European region. It is necessary to develop a model in areas such as education, mobility, urban development, energy, and healthcare. In this way, the Saarland could establish itself as a pilot region for testing social change. In spite of the high level of public debt, there is even an opportunity to carry out bold approaches.

“THE SAARLAND COULD TRY OUT MORE NEW IDEAS.
FAILURE IS A PART OF EXPERIMENTATION.
AS LONG AS YOU PULL THE RIPCORD IN TIME,
THIS WILL NOT LEAD TO ANYTHING BAD
IN A FUNDAMENTALLY STABLE SOCIETY.”

Jeanette Huber

The experts are of the opinion that the Saarland pulled off a major coup with its France Strategy. By 2030, half of the Saarland population is to be bilingual; by 2043, French will be the second official language. This means that the Saarland will have the unique position of being the first bilingual federal state in Germany. The experts feel that this is a strong vision: The federal state has signed up for a 30-year project—long-term planning such as this is a rarity in the usually hectic business of policy-making. With its France Strategy, the Saarland is reinforcing its geo-economic and cultural function as an interface between Germany and France as well as its status as a European region.

In spite of the positive and sustainable approaches of the France Strategy, the experts find the Saarland's positioning as a European region to be still somewhat hazy from an external perspective. After the mining tradition shaped the image of the federal state for a very long time, the experts feel that no new overall image is currently available that would be capable of evoking spontaneous associations. Only at second and third glance is it clear to outsiders what the region stands for and where its strengths and weaknesses lie.

Accordingly, the experts make the case for developing a central model for the Saarland as part of its marketing and communication activities. They make reference to a great many initiatives in the Saarland for which a uniform message needs to be formulated. The experts emphasize that a profile will emerge by focusing on the essentials: If the outside world is to understand what sets the Saarland apart, less

is more. The experts maintain that formulating new central messages is primarily a job for federal state policy. The challenge here is for the messages not only to hit their mark in the Saarland, but also to be projected throughout Germany, France, Luxembourg—and ideally the rest of Europe as well. The experts see the Saarland campaign—with the motto “Großes entsteht immer im Kleinen” (Great things come in small packages)—as a step in the right direction.

Based on this model, the Saarland should boldly address education policy issues above and beyond its France Strategy and undertake new approaches in policy areas such as mobility, housing, urban development in medium-sized cities, energy and environmental protection, and geriatric care. In this regard, the experts call for more courage and more willingness to experiment. In this way, the Saarland could establish itself as a pilot region for testing social change that attracts interest throughout Germany and Europe.

In this future vision, the experts see an advantage in the small size of the Saarland and the close networking of its players that this entails: Thanks to these factors, ideas and concepts can be implemented quickly and at moderate cost. The experts also believe that it will be possible to identify false moves quickly and to take swift steps to correct any negative developments.

“THE SAARLAND HAS PLENTY OF ATTRACTIVE QUALITIES.
BUT THEY ARE HARDLY KNOWN AT ALL IN THE REST OF GERMANY.
THE STATE GOVERNMENT, THE HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS, THE START-UP SCENE,
THE ESTABLISHED COMPANIES—ALL OF THESE SHOULD BE
INTERESTED IN PROJECTING A POSITIVE IMAGE OF THE SAARLAND.”

Edeltraud Glänzer

The experts feel that there are great opportunities for bringing these daring approaches to fruition. At the same time, however, these are limited by the Saarland’s tight budget situation and high level of public debt. The federal state’s mountain of debt is part of the legacy of the heavy industry period. Coal is the least culpable factor in this regard. According to the experts, the precarious financial situation is primarily due to subsidies awarded to the steel industry in the 1980s. For 30 years now, federal state governments have been limited in their fiscal policy measures.

It is doubtful whether the federal state will escape from its debt in spite of the self-sustaining nature of its economy and the severe cuts it has to implement. Accordingly, it is being hotly discussed among the experts whether the Saarland has the self-healing capacity to free itself of debt by itself or whether the federal government will need to lend a hand. One argument in favor of the Saarland freeing itself of debt is the massive economic momentum that the region would then generate. Experts also believe that this would boost the region's image considerably, which in turn would further strengthen the region. On the other hand, were federal funding to be provided, the debt would be paid off more quickly. However, this could also give rise to a "handout mentality" which would prevent a new beginning. The Saarland experts point out that the "debt brake" (Schuldenbremse) also has a negative impact on investments in education, limiting or even jeopardizing the future viability of the federal state.

Opinion is also divided among the experts as regards alternative financing forms such as public-private partnerships. Those in favor see a potential means of effecting important investments that would not be possible with regular budgetary resources. At the same time, local businesses would take on a degree of responsibility for infrastructural projects and would be involved in state development. Experts who oppose the idea point to the pursuit of profit among private partners and to the sustained low-interest phase in which conventional financing through loans would be a more cost-effective alternative.

AT A GLANCE

Political challenges in the Saarland

Unlike the economic situation, the public finance situation is somewhat alarming. In the municipalities and municipal associations, per capita debt is currently at €6,620—the highest of any non-city federal state in Germany. The Saarland has adopted rigid belt-tightening measures in order to reduce its net borrowing to zero by 2020. However, given the current refugee situation, the debt brake is being increasingly called into question. The geographical proximity to and the close cultural ties with France are the basis for the federal state government's France Strategy. The Saarland aims to be bilingual by 2043, with French to take its place alongside German as the lingua franca. The aim is to create a high-performance multilingual area shaped by both German and French influences. With the France Strategy, the Saarland wishes to define a USP for itself, thereby helping to shape its future. This is seen by some as a laboratory for German-French cooperation at all levels.

COMBATING DEPOPULATION WITH A COSMOPOLITAN OUTLOOK

The experts' verdict: The historic and geographic proximity to France points to the possibility of positioning the Saarland as a cosmopolitan region. The pragmatic and open approach it takes to dealing with refugees is another factor that confirms the cosmopolitan outlook of its people. In order to reinforce this image of the region, the welcoming spirit and the civic involvement in the population should continue to be encouraged.

“AN OPPORTUNITY MAY WELL LIE IN CULTIVATING
A SPECIAL GERMAN-FRENCH OUTLOOK ON
LIFE IN THE SAARLAND, THUS LENDING THE STATE
A TOUCH MORE GLAMOR.”

Peter Wippermann

The Saarland is the oldest of the new federal states. Following a referendum in 1955, the Saarland became part of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1957. Until 1947 it was under French occupation, then between 1947 and 1956 was partially sovereign with economic ties with France. Anyone who was born in 1945 has therefore changed nationality four times. The Saarland has more of a French influence than the rest of the Federal Republic. However, there is one aspect in which the Saarland differs greatly from its Gallic neighbors: While many children are being born in France, the Saarland has the lowest birth rate in Germany and is also threatened by the trend towards depopulation in the region. Young people are drawn to cities—for them, a city without a subway is nothing more than a town.

The experts feel that the federal state will not be able to extricate itself from the pincer grip of low birth rate on the one hand and the trend towards urbanization on the other: Family planning is an exclusively private matter for people in free societies. They only venture to start families when they wish to do so, when they see future prospects in having a family, and when their environment offers a means of combining working and family life effectively. These include good daycare centers, care facilities during the school holidays, leisure activities, an environment that offers a high standard of living for children and adults of all ages, family-friendly structures in companies – and above all social acceptance of working mothers. The experts say that the French state has created family-friendly conditions by providing free kindergartens, all-day schools for older children, and high income tax allowances and, thanks to higher subsidies, has succeeded in stabilizing the population, even in rural areas. Compared to this, the Saarland has clear shortcomings that will take considerable time and effort to overcome.

Furthermore, the experts do not expect the Saarland to succeed in stemming the trend towards more and more people leaving the region and moving to other parts of Germany, let alone turning it around. One of the most important trends affecting the Saarland is the migration of people towards large cities. Future researchers claim that urbanization will change Germany radically. When it comes to attractiveness, the state capital Saarbrücken—which is home to 180,000 people—is well able to hold its own against similarly-sized cities like Mülheim an der Ruhr, Kassel, Rostock, and Hamm. However, well-educated young people tend to be drawn above all to big cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Cologne, and Frankfurt, or to “trendy” university towns with a wide range of cultural and subcultural activities. The experts believe that preserving and building on the Saarland’s rich cultural tapestry and cultivating a German-French outlook on life are important measures for increasing the attractiveness of the region. However, even if these efforts do bear fruit, they can at best slow down the trend towards depopulation.

“IN THE FACE OF THE HIGH POPULATION LOSS,
THE REFUGEES ARE A GIFT FROM THE
HEAVENS. THEY WILL NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF
OUR SHRINKING POPULATION ENTIRELY,
BUT THEY WILL HELP TO CURB AND CUSHION IT.”

Richard Weber

The experts agree unanimously that migration by refugees is a major challenge for the Saarland—as for all non-city federal states—but also that it is an opportunity to correct the demographic development, to stem depopulation in the region, and to increase social vitality. In interviews conducted in October 2015 —i. e. in the midst of the refugee crisis—the experts put forward the opinion that most of the refugees were willing to be integrated and to build a future for themselves and their families here.¹ However, the experts also saw the risk of the integration efforts failing and of no work being found for the new arrivals. In this case, they are concerned that today’s refugees will be tomorrow’s long-term unemployed.

¹ In this way, the Saarland experts’ opinion ties in largely with the findings of the expert survey conducted as part of the Delphi study, the first research wave of which took place in August and September 2015.

According to the experts, the Saarland is taking a prudent, pragmatic, and very successful approach to integrating refugees. In particular Interior Minister Klaus Bouillon, who set up shop with his minister office for seven weeks at the initial registration center in Lebach, earned a reputation as someone willing to roll up his sleeves. The application and acceptance procedures are fast and the federal state government is very much involved in accommodating refugees. For example, the state-owned SHS Strukturholding Saar and its real estate companies are helping to manage the refugee crisis, buying up housing space throughout the federal state in order to accommodate refugees, thereby avoiding profit-oriented private operator models. The experts maintain that, with this package of measures, the federal state government is sending important signals to the population in order to increase their acceptance of refugee integration.

The Saarland economy also sees the migration of refugees as a great opportunity and, by providing training measures, makes a contribution to integrating migrants. In this way, the external experts see the Saarland's refugee policy as being part of its economic policy. This means that the Saarland economy is not only going along with the integration of refugees but is also actively helping to advance it. Experts do not see the below-average qualifications of the refugees as constituting an obstacle to integration for the Saarland economy: the refugees are young and willing to learn. As a consequence, these represent potential for the skilled crafts providers and SMEs which can no longer fill the 3,000 apprenticeship positions that are available at present.

In an optimistic future projection by the experts, the Saarland could expand its function as a bridge between Germany and France and constitute the “empathetic federal state” in 2025. In order to achieve this, it is vital to encourage a welcoming spirit and civic involvement among the population. This could also have the effect of increasing the quality of life in the Saarland for the population as a whole.

A strategic lever for this, in the experts' view, is civic involvement, which has an impact on volunteer work in particular. Without volunteers, the refugee crisis would not be manageable—and especially when it comes to integrating refugees, there are great opportunities for countering demographic trends. Volunteer work is not just restricted to the refugee crisis—it extends well beyond this and into all areas of life. Volunteer work has grown in importance in modern society, while the volunteers' motivation is changing at the same time. Their involvement is no longer only an expression of idealism, altruism, and selflessness. Rather, people who engage in volunteer work also wish to derive a benefit for themselves—for example the chance to meet new people, to enrich their lives with new ideas and outlooks, and to find recognition.

Particularly given the spirit of solidarity that existed in the early mining regions, voluntary work has a long tradition and is held in high esteem by society. The experts note that, in the case of the Saarland, mobilizing volunteers could be used as a strategic lever in shaping change. This is supported by demographic trends. The Saarland society is an aging society. However, older people today are in far better physical and mental shape than in past generations. Many older people would like to remain involved in the work process—for instance on a part-time basis, in company-related initiatives, or in voluntary work. So that older people do not have to arduously seek out areas of activity for themselves, cities and municipalities should take this potential on board and make systematic use of it. According to the experts, there are still shortcomings in this regard throughout Germany and, as a consequence, in the Saarland as well.

AT A GLANCE

Population development in the Saarland

Measuring approximately 2,600 square kilometers, the Saarland is the smallest of all non-city federal states in Germany. The region between France, Luxembourg, and the Rhineland-Palatinate is home to 990,000 people, a number that is on the decrease. The demographic shift is taking place earlier and faster here than in the other federal states in the west of the country: By 2020, the number of inhabitants is expected to fall by 4.2 percent, and the working population by 8.6 percent. At the same time, the number of school leavers is expected to decrease by as much as 24 percent. However, the Saarland still has the highest population density of any non-city federal state in Germany apart from North Rhine-Westphalia.

THE SAARLAND AS A TECHNOLOGY REGION — DIGITAL AND ANALOG

The experts' verdict: The future belongs to people with STEM expertise, i.e. in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. They not only make use of the digitization that is penetrating all areas of life but actually produce it in the first place. Today, the region's Saarland University has already made a name for itself in science and informatics. In the future, the Saarland should build on its potential in this area. In the long term, the region could well establish itself as a stronghold for European IT innovation.

Saarland University has successfully specialized itself with a strong leaning towards information technology and business informatics. As the location for two Max Planck Institutes—for Informatics and for Software Systems—and the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI), Saarland University holds key positions for current and future digitization. These institutes not only conduct fundamental research but are valuable development partners to the IT industry. In 2015, internet giant Google even acquired a stake in DFKI—the voice recognition software used by Google for cellphones (“OK Google”) was not developed in the Silicon Valley but rather in Saarbrücken.

Saarland University also has further specializations in the field of cancer research. However, the experts feel that additional research areas are needed in order for the university to have a truly future-oriented outlook. In view of the economic structure in the Saarland with its many automotive suppliers and other technology companies, it would make sense for the university to concentrate on technical areas when expanding.

Because the responsibility for schools is held at federal state level, the Saarland has the option of taking new approaches with its school system and preparing for the challenges of the future. Against the background of digitization and Saarland University's academic specialization, the experts are of the opinion that the federal state's education system should assign particular importance to STEM subjects at school level as well. In this constellation, there is a high likelihood that schoolchildren from the Saarland with a natural aptitude for STEM subjects (encouraged at school) will end up studying a science- or technology-related subject at Saarland University. On graduating, they can then find work as extremely well qualified specialists or managers in the locally based technology companies or start up companies of their own. However, the experts point out that the technology segment will not be able to absorb all school leavers and that employees' social skills will have an increasingly great role in future, including in the technology sector. This means that it is important for schools to focus on personality development as well as technical know-how.

A CONSORTIUM UNIVERSITY
WITH A HIGH INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

The experts' verdict: Networking and education are two central future themes. However, education is still not networked enough. With a consortium of the universities of Metz, Luxembourg, and Kaiserslautern, the region would be in a position to present a comprehensive range of subjects. The cross-border cooperation would also lend the curriculum a strong international character.

The idea of a consortium university consisting of higher education institutions in the Saarland, Luxembourg, the Rhineland-Palatinate, and Lorraine offers a whole host of new opportunities. For a start, administration costs would fall. Given that all parts of the consortium university would be under the same administration, students could move between the different geographic locations and gain experience studying abroad with a minimum of bureaucracy.

“PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATION POLICY
MEASURE BY 2025 IS THE CREATION OF
A CONSORTIUM UNIVERSITY WITH SAARLAND UNIVERSITY
AND THE UNIVERSITIES IN METZ,
LUXEMBOURG, AND KAISERSLAUTERN.”

Richard Weber

By dividing up responsibilities and focusing funds, the consortium could also pave the way for top research in individual fields. According to the experts, the consortium university should be set up in such a way that its program of studies reflects the economic perspectives and the potential of the sectors based in the European region. The focus should therefore be on the science faculties as well as on international economic sciences and international law. If a suitable approach is pursued and an acknowledged high level of quality achieved, the experts believe that qualifications from a cross-border consortium university may well find high international recognition.

Ideally, qualifications from a consortium university consisting of higher education institutes from the Saarland, Lorraine, and Luxembourg could even gain acceptance on a par with the French Grandes Écoles de Commerce. This in turn would have a positive impact on the economic development of the Saarland and its function as a hub between Germany and France. For instance, the Saarland could become the region in which French companies seek out new talent for activities in their German-speaking markets—and, by the same token, German companies could recruit specialists and managers for French-speaking regions.

AT A GLANCE

The Saarland education landscape

The close ties with France are reflected in the Saarland's education system: 58 percent of schoolchildren learn French as a foreign language (compared with just 18.8 percent in Germany as a whole). In 2012, 53 percent of all schoolchildren in one school year attained the Hochschulreife school-leaving qualification (or the technical Fachhochschulreife equivalent) that would entitle them to a place at a higher education institute. This is somewhat higher than the national average of 49 percent. A total of 29,500 students were registered in the Saarland in the winter semester of 2014/2015. Five years previously, this figure was only 22,800, indicating an increase of almost 30 percent. The higher education landscape is shaped to a great extent by Saarland University with its 17,700 students and the HTW University of Applied Sciences with 5,500 students. There are also four smaller higher education institutions. The growing number of students has also led to an increase in proportion of the population (aged between 15 to 65 years) with a higher education degree: from 4.2 percent in 2012 to 5.8 percent in 2013.

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