



## 1. North Rhine-Westphalia

In the system of the Federal Republic of Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia is one of 16 federal states. With about 18 million inhabitants in an area of approximately 34,000 km<sup>2</sup>, North Rhine-Westphalia (often called NRW) is not the largest German state, but the most populous. According to size and population it is comparable to the EU Member State of the Netherlands, its Western neighbour. If North Rhine-Westphalia would be a sovereign state, it would be number 8 according to its population in the European Union and number 17 worldwide according to its GDP. The state's governmental capital is Düsseldorf about 590.000 (inhabitants), while Cologne is the biggest city with more than 1.000.000 inhabitants. Four world heritage sites and 14 nature parks are located in NRW.

## 2. The Ruhr – Birthplace of Spatial Planning

During the industrial revolution one of the largest metropolitan areas has emerged in the area of today's North Rhine-Westphalia: The "Ruhrgebiet" - internationally known as "The Ruhr". Here, at numerous locations, mines brought coal to the surface. Based on the coal and coke made from this coal, steel and iron were produced in high furnaces by using iron ore transported to the region from abroad. The economic boom of this early industrial cluster also caused an explosive growth of numerous cities and a densely industrialised and urbanised region, dominated by industrial needs. It was early recognized that infrastructures, zoning and residential development in the region needed a strong planning approach and control by planning. The Ruhr may thus be considered as the birthplace of spatial planning and regional planning.



Consequently a regional planning authority, the "Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk (SVR)", was founded in the 1920's with the main task to secure regional green corridors in order to structure the metropolitan area and to serve as recreational areas for the growing population. This authority is still active today as "Regionalverband Ruhr (RVR)".

### 3. Parks and Gardens in the Ruhr

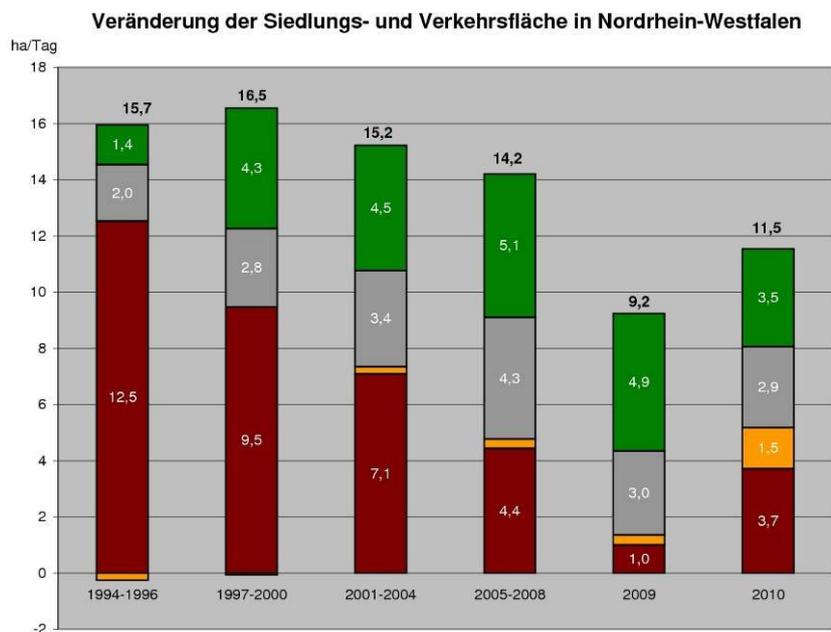
In the 1960's some sections of these green belts were transformed into so-called "Revierparks". These are large scale public parks, which are explicitly multifunctional (games, sports, leisure, culture, etc.) and targeting at all social and age groups. They can be regarded as early examples of "hybrid parks."

In addition to these "Revierparks", other parks and gardens are of great importance in the Ruhr region too. Many industrial workers had to be recruited from rural areas, where they have been accustomed to have a small garden close to their homes, to grow vegetables and fruits and to raise small animals. Wide areas of the Ruhr region are therefore characterized by a large scale housing areas with home gardens and allotment gardens (public land rented to associations of gardeners with free access for the public). Dating from the same period, the parks around the villas of factory owners and public parks, some of them based on the commitment of middle class citizens, add to the variety of green areas within the Ruhrgebiet. Not to forget that even in this region with its image of an industrial area parks and gardens are rooted in history: feudal castle gardens and the gardens and parks of early stately homes.

More recently the history of the Ruhr was characterized by deep structural changes: a decline of the heavy industry in favour of other trade and service enterprises, but also strong decline of the total number of jobs. During this structural change many sites of coal mines, steel factories other industrial activities and railway land became derelict. They were converted into the new settlement areas or redesigned for recreational purposes (next photo shows Landscape Park Duisburg-Nord as one example) or turned into green areas for ecological reasons.



The next Figure X shows the daily growth of build land (red), land used for economic purposes (yellow), traffic areas (grey) and the related growth of green urban areas and recreational areas in North Rhine-Westphalia between 1994 and 2010.



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Very often some buildings and other elements are maintained as a testimony of the industrial heritage providing unique locations for the culture or landmarks for technology centres. Today, the Ruhr, is also promoted internationally as "Metropoleruhr".

#### 4. Other Regions in North Rhine-Westphalia

But North Rhine-Westphalia is much more than the internationally known Ruhr area. Along the river Rhine, which is the most important European transport corridor thanks to the ship traffic and parallel railway tracks and roads, another metropolitan area, the so-called 'Rheinschiene' (Rhine axis) , has developed between Duisburg, Düsseldorf (next photo show the redevelopment of the harbour site), Cologne and Bonn. Together with the Ruhr area they form a European metropolitan region with a population of about 11 million inhabitants.



Many of the cities along the Rhine have been founded in Roman times. But similar to the Ruhr, their industrial development and related growth requested regional green belts to structure the area and to safeguard well functioning infrastructures and healthy environments.

Apart from the Rhein-Ruhr metropolitan area, the majority of North Rhine-Westphalia is formed by more rural landscapes. These rural areas of North Rhine-Westphalia however are no peripheral agricultural areas, but are closely intertwined with the Rhine-Ruhr area and some solitary agglomerations (such as Aachen, Siegen, Münster, Bielefeld). Their economic structures and employment rates show high percentages of (often highly specialised) industrial activities, the service sector and administrative functions. The people living here – while enjoying an intact and attractive surrounding countryside – also have a great interest for both the numerous historic parks and

gardens and the more recent public parks and gardens created in the context of urban and regional development projects.

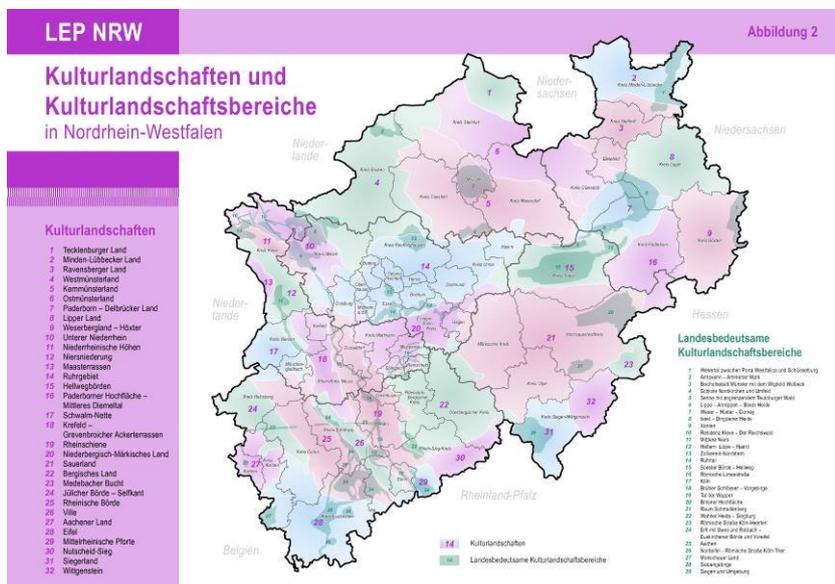
## 5. Spatial Planning at the State Chancellery

The State Chancellery is the office of prime minister. It coordinates the various ministries of the country and is itself responsible for European policy, spatial planning ('Raumordnung') and planning activities on the level of the federal state North Rhine-Westphalia ('Landesplanung').

Currently, the State Chancellery is drafting the outline of a new development plan for the state ('Landesentwicklungsplan'). This development plan will identify main spatial structures, land uses and natural resources (in order to protect them). The plan also informs and advises regional planning about the principles to be used for the assessment, valorisation and harmonisation of various (and often conflicting) land use requirements.

## 6. Protective Cultural Landscape Development

A new objective, which by now was not really pursued by spatial planning on the state level, is the so-called "protective cultural landscape development." Future spatial planning will not only be requested to identify conflicts between different land uses and to resolve them, but also to be aware that spatial planning interferes with historically matured landscapes and - consciously or unconsciously - redesigns those landscapes. The key objective is to preserve the diversity and variety of cultural landscapes in North Rhine-Westphalia (Figure Y below shows an overview of identified cultural landscapes in NRW).



Spatial planning will be obliged to deliberately ensure that important historic objects are maintained as cultural heritage. Such elements and structures will allow reading and experiencing the historical development of sites and areas within the landscape. The knowledge about historical roots is an important factor in the development of regional identity. Regional identity in turn is becoming increasingly important for international competitiveness.

In addition, the effects that spatial planning has – even if at a higher, more abstract level – on the appearance of a region and thus on the wellbeing and satisfaction of the people living there should be widely recognized and well considered in all planning activities.

The preservation and creation of parks and gardens will be a piece of the puzzle in this 'protective development of cultural landscapes'.

## 7. Mitigation of Climate Change

Another new topic in spatial planning is the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Also here parks and other large scale green areas will be of particular importance for spatial planning: first of all urban parks and green areas will become “islands of comfortable climates” whenever longer heat waves will cause very hot temperatures in the inner cities. Furthermore the green belts and corridors mentioned earlier will enable or at least facilitate the import of fresh(er) air to improve the urban climate, particularly in the urban agglomerations.

This is why parks and gardens have to be in the focus of regional planning, but even more in the focus of urban planning. Here on the lower planning level, the different functions of the open space must be considered: “climate comfort islands” in the inner city may require particularly large trees to provide much shade. Such large trees however might obstruct the flow of fresh air in green corridors. Additionally, it should be noted that trees, shrubs and other plants to be used in public parks and gardens need to be adapted to future climate, and that anticipated climatic benefits (e.g. cooling effects thanks to transpiration) will only be provided in significant quantity or quality by certain plants.

## 8. Hybrid Parks

The State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia would like to pursue these questions, which are certainly interesting to other partners too, within the framework of the INTERREG IVC project HYBRID PARKS and to discuss whether some design principles and measures can be considered as best practice to enhance the positive climatic effects of parks and gardens for urban climate.

Conversely, we as a state planning agency are interested in learning from other partners how parks and gardens can be developed and used as elements of a vivid cultural landscape.

## 9. Useful links:

NRW State Government:

[www.nrw.de](http://www.nrw.de) (German, English, French, Dutch)

NRW Tourism agency:

[www.nrw-tourismus.de](http://www.nrw-tourismus.de) (German, English, Dutch coming soon)

Regionalverband Ruhr:

[www.rvr.online.de](http://www.rvr.online.de) (German, English, Dutch, Polish, Turkish)

Metropoleruhr: [www.metropoleruhr.de](http://www.metropoleruhr.de)

(German, English, Dutch, Polish, Turkish)

NRW on Wikipedia:

<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordrhein-Westfalen> (in most languages)

More information about Hybrid Parks and INTERREG IVC:

[www.hybridparks.eu](http://www.hybridparks.eu)