

## **Ruhr-University Bochum**

### **Geographical and social spaces in flux - the example of the Ruhr area**

Just as Europe's map has undergone significant changes during the last twenty years, it's social and cultural norms and forms of living have been shaped by the process of change. Centrally located on the continent, changes within Germany are paid particular attention to by many neighbours. The *International Summer Academy on the Ruhr (ISA Ruhr)* links these perceptions with the current state in the field of transformation research.

One of our concerted starting points will be the Ruhr area. For almost fifty years, the process of structural change – still well underway – has left its mark on Germany's largest megalopolis and facilitates both political and cultural developments even today.

In 2010, the Ruhr region is going to present itself as the *European Capital of Culture*, until recently a rather inconceivable award.

*ISA Ruhr* courses (lectures and seminars) bring together methods from the social and cultural sciences to develop new images of Germany. Categories of social change, such as identity, value change and pluralised forms of living will key-determine the discussions.

Equally, the spatial perception of Germany, its topographic, cultural and mentality historical diversity will be provided with fertile grounds.

The category of space not merely represents a fashionable cultural theory, but the *spatial turn* delivers impulses for manifold cultural explorations. At the centre are industrial and scientific cultures in the Ruhr area. The rich cultural regions in and around Leipzig and Weimar serve as both contrastive and parallel elements.

As part of the *German Summer Academy 2008*, *ISA Ruhr* is an offer addressing international Germany experts or those aspiring to qualify as such, e.g. young cultural and social researchers aiming to focus on Germany in their research and in academic schooling. Hosting *ISA Ruhr*, the interdisciplinary *Institute for German Studies (IDF)* draws on longtime experience in advanced postgraduate schooling such as the "*East-West*" *Postgraduate College* with over a hundred doctorate students from around twenty-five countries since the year 2001.