

UA RUHR ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE RUHR,
DEAR READERS,

In 2023, our alliance has once again contributed to further strengthening the Ruhr as a region for education, science and business with many excellent projects. We are delighted that the University Alliance Ruhr continues to act as a unit in new areas, launching initiatives and sharing common values and views.

In 2023, for example, it was a particular concern of ours to jointly sign the Magna Charta Universitatum, the declaration on the fundamental principles of universities worldwide, and to make our commitment as an alliance to the universal tasks of universities. We are aware of this responsibility and are trying to tackle societal challenges at various levels, such as climate change, the shortage of teaching staff and structural change in the Ruhr region, in a sustainable manner. To this end, we have launched several projects in 2023 to strengthen young, highly qualified specialists in the areas of energy transition, teaching qualifications and university start-ups with partners from the region. In this way, we are preparing young people to shape our future.

The centers of our Research Alliance continue to conduct research on the most important global issues of our time, and the College specifically promotes international networking and visibility in the humanities and social sciences. The number of internationally recognized newly appointed professors in the Research Alliance has risen to 14 in 2023, and numerous other appointment procedures are underway. In October, the Research Alliance was officially opened in the new premises of the College for Social Sciences and Humanities with prominent guests from academia and politics.

In 2024, we will implement projects that will sustainably increase our performance as a strong research alliance. The UA Ruhr is driven by the pursuit of joint scientific excellence – as the powerhouse behind an excellent, nationally and internationally networked knowledge region. We will continue to raise the profile of the UA Ruhr to achieve this goal: In the course of the year, a prestigious International Advisory Board will take up its work. It will support the UA Ruhr as an independent body of experts on strategic issues. In addition, the UA Ruhr will set up a joint committee for ethical and compliance issues, which will advise our alliance in its areas of activity in the context of university discourse.


In the spring of 2024, the UA Ruhr will welcome the German Council of Science and Humanities to its annual spring meeting. We consider it a great honor for our university network to host this distinguished group of people.

We would like to sincerely thank you for the initiatives mentioned here and the numerous other cooperative initiatives of the past year and invite you to continue to help shape the UA Ruhr with your commitment and ideas.

On the following pages, you can find out more about the above-mentioned and numerous other initiatives and collaborations that have contributed to the success of the UA Ruhr in 2023.

We wish you an inspiring read and a good start to the new year 2024!


Prof. Dr. Barbara Albert


Prof. Dr. Manfred Bayer

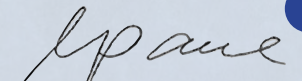

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Martin Paul

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RESEARCH ALLIANCE RUHR

RUHR RESEARCH POWER: RESEARCH ALLIANCE GAINS MOMENTUM

More than 50 new professors at four research centers and one college - this is the answer of the UA Ruhr to pressing questions in the areas of health and environment, sustainable chemistry, energy systems, data security and international networking. At the festive event on October 24th, both, the initial track record and the estimated outlook of the Research Alliance Ruhr were positive: 14 professorships have already been successfully filled and interdisciplinary collaboration is underway.

Around 100 guests from politics, research and the region came together at the new venue of the college in Essen to celebrate what has been achieved so far, to learn about the future plans of the Research Alliance and to exchange ideas.

The three rectors of the university explained how cooperation at the UA Ruhr uses synergies and gives room to conduct research in the densest university landscape in Europe. The fact that the Ruhr area, as a prime example of successful transformation, is predestined to offer a new home for top international research has already been proven by the previous appointments of top international researchers.

On the last panel of the evening, founding directors and new appointees discussed what opportunities the Research Alliance Ruhr offers and what interdisciplinary research questions it addresses. Topics ranged from how artificial intelligence can accelerate the search for new materials for the energy transition, how chemical research could help reduce greenhouse gases in concrete production, or how the renaturation of the Emscher river could help create social meeting spaces to fight loneliness.

»This is where solutions for the major challenges facing the future are conceived, developed and put into practice. The Research Alliance Ruhr stands for cutting-edge research 'made in NRW'. It will make a significant contribution to finding solutions to the pressing questions facing the future and securing people's prosperity.«

Ina Brandes, Minister for Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia

»From the perspective of the Ruhr Conference, the Research Alliance is a shining example, even beyond academia, of what can be achieved in the Ruhr area if we rely on collaboration and togetherness.«

Josef Hovenjürgen, Parliamentary State Secretary for the Special Affairs of the Ruhr Area



RESEARCH ALLIANCE RUHR

RESEARCH CENTER

One Health Ruhr – from Molecules to Systems

The Research Center One Health Ruhr investigates the fundamental mechanisms of health and disease and focuses on the complex interactions between people and their environment. In this context, the focus lies on water research, molecular cancer research and neuroscience.

Alexander Probst started as the first One Health Ruhr professor in October 2022. One year later, we are delighted to congratulate Mr. Probst on being awarded one of the internationally renowned ERC Synergy Grants. In the ‚Archean Park‘ project, Mr. Probst is searching for previously unknown metabolic pathways that made life possible for microorganisms on the primordial Earth.

One Health Ruhr is also delighted to welcome two new faces in 2023. Since September, Dirk Scheele has enriched the center with his research on cognitive and sensory changes in people living in social isolation and loneliness. Kathrin Thedieck is interested in metabolic signaling pathways of the protein mTOR, which are dysregulated in most types of cancer as well as in neurodegenerative diseases. She is also interested in how these signaling pathways are influenced by environmental factors.



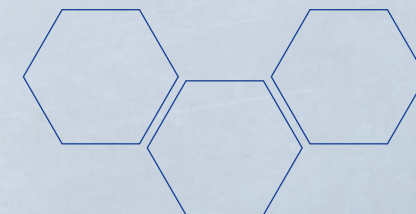
Dirk Scheele



Alexander Probst



Kathrin Thedieck



RESEARCH CENTER

Chemical Sciences and Sustainability

The Research Center Chemical Sciences and Sustainability aims to understand chemical reactions, processes and products at the molecular level. These insights will open up technological applications in chemistry, building materials and pharmaceuticals that are innovative, environmentally friendly and economically competitive.

In 2023, the center appointed a pioneer of ultrafast electron diffraction. Professor Xijie Wang’s team from Stanford University in California will establish the technology of ultrafast electron diffraction with picosecond resolution for the first time in Europe at the TU Dortmund University and the University of Duisburg-Essen. This will make it possible to characterize both the structures of quantum materials and the dynamics and structural changes of solvents and reactants in chemical and biological processes during a reaction.

Professor Simon Ebbinghaus, formerly of TU Braunschweig, started his research work in the field of biophysical chemistry at the Ruhr University Bochum in August. He uses modern spectroscopic methods to investigate the formation of fibrils and misfolded proteins in neurodegenerative diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and Huntington’s disease in real time.



Simon Ebbinghaus



Xijie Wang

RESEARCH ALLIANCE RUHR

RESEARCH CENTER

Trustworthy Data Science and Security

The Research Center Trustworthy Data Science and Security researches the trustworthiness of intelligent systems in security-critical areas. In addition to the development of new technologies, the focus is on the user side, as digital progress requires social acceptance and therefore trust in new systems and applications. The interdisciplinary research spectrum includes topics related to data analysis, machine learning and cybersecurity.

The expansion of the center was further advanced in 2023 with the addition of three professorships: Prof. Nadja Klein, Prof. Jatinder Singh and Prof. Nils Köbis joined the Center this year.

Due to the interdisciplinary orientation, however, it is not only the growth in personnel within the Center that is important; the integration of existing expertise at faculties and non-university research institutions also plays a decisive role. To this end, a joint workshop was held with the CASA Cluster of Excellence and the SecHuman graduate school. In addition, four speed dating events were organized for scientists from the Ruhr universities, from which numerous ideas for interdisciplinary cooperation emerged. The graduate school was also launched at an international conference as part of a two-day event.



RESEARCH CENTER

Future Energy Materials and Systems

The Research Center Future Energy Materials and Systems welcomed three outstanding international professors in 2023, including two top-class female professors and a dual-career couple. This clearly demonstrates that here not only interdisciplinary research on new materials for sustainable energy systems is promoted, but also the scientists who perform it.



© Melanie Dahmen, UDE

»My experimental research focuses on electron transport in solids. Specifically, I'm currently studying the role of electrons in phase transformations of metals.«

Gabi Schierning holds a RC FEMS professorship for Applied Quantum Materials at the University of Duisburg-Essen

»My studies contribute to the exciting research field of computational materials design, an emerging multidisciplinary subject that brings together innovative efforts from condensed matter physics, materials chemistry and computer science.«

Silvana Botti holds the professorship for the Theory of Excited States of Integrated Solid State Systems in Bochum



© Katja Marquard, RUB



© Katja Marquard, RUB

»My main interest is in the development of new materials by combining traditional ab-initio techniques with more advanced machine learning algorithms, especially for technological applications in the fields of energy conversion and storage.«

Miguel Marques holds the professorship of Artificial Intelligence for Integrated Materials Science at RUB

RESEARCH ALLIANCE RUHR

COLLEGE

College for Social Sciences and Humanities

In 2023, the College for Social Sciences and Humanities further refined its profile and advanced its establishment as an internationally competitive Institute for Advanced Study.

The first Call for Applications for the new international Senior Fellowship Programme was published in summer: From numerous applications, the Scientific Board selected 20 internationally recognised scholars with an outstanding research profile in the humanities and social sciences. The senior fellows will work on collaborative research projects with tandem partners from the UA Ruhr during their six-month stays at the College, commencing in spring and autumn 2024 respectively.

Another milestone was reached with starting the recruitment for three open-topic junior professorships that expand the aspect of openness to the target faculties and open up new ways of recruitment for the UA Ruhr. At the College, the junior professors find excellent conditions for establishing three thematically independent research groups in team with six doctoral candidates.

Moreover, a positive change was marked by moving the College's offices to Lindenallee in the city centre of Essen. The representative premises provide modern facilities and a large conference hall.



MILE STONES RESEARCH ALLIANCE RUHR

2007

- 📍 Foundation of the University Alliance Ruhr

2019/2020

- 📍 Conceptual development of Research Alliance Ruhr

2022

- 📍 Cooperation agreement signed
- 📍 Initial development phase of Research Centers and College
- 📍 Allocation of 123 million EUR by the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia until 2025
- 📍 First appointments to professorships

2023

- 📍 Infrastructural concept of Research Centers and College
- 📍 College opens in Essen city center
- 📍 CfA for the College's Fellowship Programme
- 📍 Appointments to further professorships
- 📍 Grand Opening

MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM 2020

The three partners of the Universitätsallianz Ruhr jointly signed the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 in October 2023: a strong commitment to the universal missions of universities.

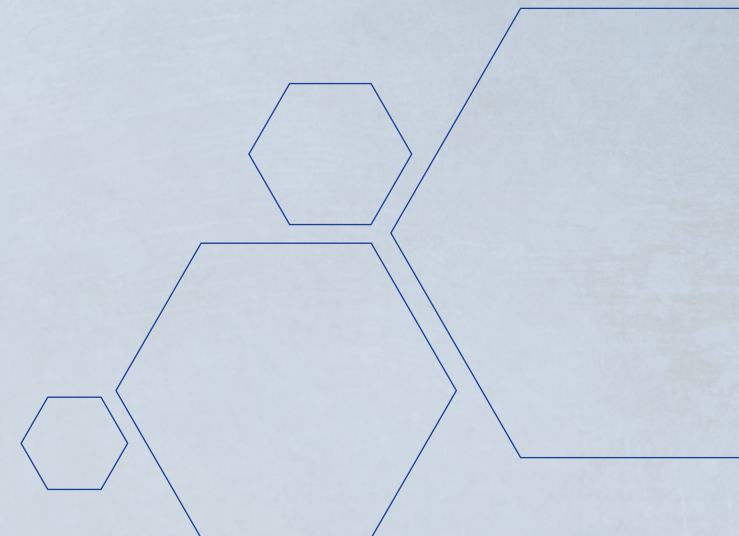
The Magna Charta Universitatum (MCU) bundles universal values and principles that connect universities across epochs and countries. The document was first drawn up in 1988, when the University of Bologna, the oldest university in the world, celebrated its 900th anniversary. More than 950 universities on every continent have since joined the MCU. In 2020, the manifesto was renewed to emphasize the responsibility of universities in global change.



Joint signing of the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020 by the Universitätsallianz Ruhr: Rector of the University of Duisburg-Essen Prof. Dr. Barbara Albert, the Rector of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum Prof. Dr. Martin Paul and the Rector of the TU Dortmund University Prof. Dr. Manfred Bayer.

With the joint signing on Oct. 24, 2023, our university alliance committed itself to the values of the MCU. The Rector of the University of Duisburg-Essen Prof. Dr. Barbara Albert, the Rector of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum Prof. Dr. Martin Paul and the Rector of the TU Dortmund University Prof. Dr. Manfred Bayer classify their commitment: *»In Germany, we often take for granted the independence and inseparability of fact-based research and teaching, open in dialogue and free from political influence and economic interests. But in other parts of the world, freedom of research and teaching is fiercely contested. With the Magna Charta Universitatum, renewed in 2020, we accept the responsibility to promote university values and to use our research to address global challenges in order to develop solutions to preserve the planet. Health, prosperity, and intellectual enlightenment are fundamental values that universities, with their global knowledge networking, help to realize.«*

Universities are vivid actors in our society, generating and publishing new knowledge with increasing dynamism, at the same time that global trust in science is declining. All the more, the Magna Charta Universitatum aims to position universities as the places from which fact-based research, analysis and informed action emanate.

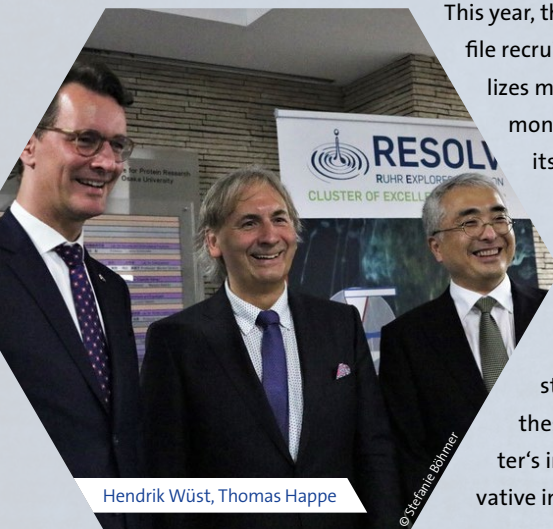


FLAGSHIP PROGRAM AND CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

RUHR EXPLORES SOLVATION (RESOLV)

The over 200 researchers of the Excellence Cluster Ruhr Explores Solvation, known as RESOLV, reflect on a successful year 2023. It was a year marked by significant discoveries, international partnerships, and innovative projects. The continuous commitment to excellent research and science is evident in 245 new publications on Solvation Science.

New appointments for interdisciplinary research



Hendrik Wüst, Thomas Happe

This year, the Excellence Cluster RESOLV has welcomed high-profile recruits: Jörg Behler, an expert in interatomic potentials, utilizes machine learning to comprehend chemical reactions. Simon Ebbingshaus investigates protein misfolding to explore its role in neurodegenerative diseases. Edvardas Narevicius, honoured with a Humboldt Professorship, explores quantum mechanical effects in molecule collisions. Xijie Wang, transitioning from the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory in the USA to the Ruhr region, aims to employ ultrafast electron diffraction to study structural dynamics in solutions. The appointment of these top international researchers strengthens the cluster's interdisciplinary research spectrum and promises innovative insights for solvation science.

International collaboration for global Solvation Science

RESOLV is further expanding its international partnerships in 2023. Thomas Happe travelled to Osaka, Japan, to present the Cluster's hydrogen research to Minister President Hendrik Wüst. In a joint laboratory, they highlighted essential aspects of research on sustainable hydrogen production us-

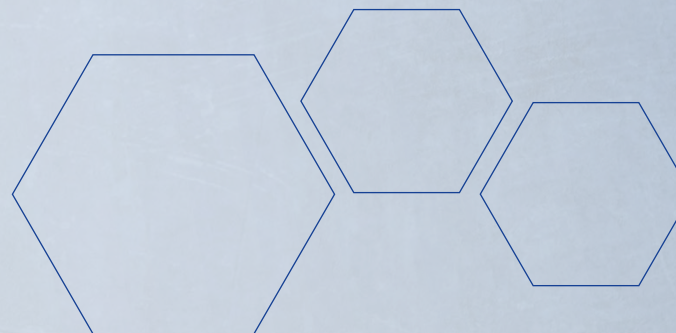
ing hydrogenases. The enthusiastic delegation returned to Germany with fresh impetus from the „world-class research.“

ERC Consolidator Grant for tailored carbanions

Viktoria Däschlein-Gessner received a Consolidator Grant from the European Research Council amounting to 2 million euros for her research on stabilized carbanions. These highly reactive carbon compounds can be stabilized through specialized molecule design, opening up new application possibilities. She aims to develop tailored compounds, control their stability, and explore new application fields. The research seeks to create new efficient catalysts or superbases for CO₂ binding or electronically switchable materials. This grant is the latest among 22 ERC grants awarded to RESOLV researchers thus far.



Viktoria Däschlein-Gessner



FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

MATERIALS CHAIN

With over 250 members, the Materials Chain is the largest profile focus of the UA Ruhr and can look back on successful activities in 2023.

The fifth Materials Chain International Conference, MCIC 2023, hit the nerve of the times with its thematic focus on Materials Science Meets Artificial Intelligence - Advancements in Research and Innovation. 120 participants from academic and industrial research were able to discuss current issues and developments in data-driven materials science from atomistic to microstructure descriptions and structure-property relationships as well as in research data management. The development and application of artificial intelligence and machine learning methods can be found in the up-and-coming field of materials informatics and concerns experimental and simulation-driven approaches in equal measure, making it one of the central future topics of the joint platform.

In collaboration with the Research Centre Future Energy Materials and Systems, the Materials Chain once again coordinated the seminar series „Materials and Energy: Challenges and Opportunities“ in 2023, where top international scientists and early career researchers presented their research find-

ings and ideas. With contributors from the fields of electrical engineeringx, chemistry and physics, the seminar showed that interdisciplinarity is a key factor in researching new materials for energy systems.

Both the presentations and the discussions at the various events provided important impulses for the further development of the Materials Chain, which acts as a central platform to support centrally coordinated projects and activities: for example, in supporting an excellence cluster application „Transforming Materials Science“. The aim of this transdisciplinary initiative is the accelerated and targeted development of compositionally and structurally complex materials that can be produced sustainably on a large scale and that can convert mechanical, electrical and chemical forms of energy with high efficiency. In this way, they contribute to the provision of green energy and the electrification of our energy system and make a key contribution to tackling climate change.



COMPETENCE FIELD OF METROPOLITAN RESEARCH (KOMET)

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOCUS „SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION OF METROPOLITAN REGIONS“

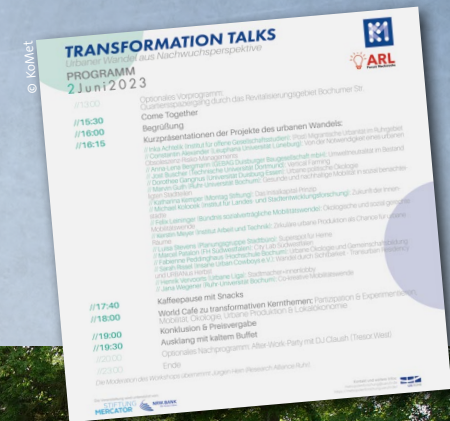
The Competence Field of Metropolitan Research forms the central platform for the integration of research, teaching and transfer on all aspects of metropolitan research within the University Alliance Ruhr. Last year's decision to focus on aspects of transformation as a central research theme was implemented in various formats in 2023.

As a basis for the further development of the Emscher conversion strategies, a study was carried out on behalf of the Emschergenossenschaft with the participation of several KoMet researchers, which identified potential areas suitable for bundled development impulses along the Emscher and, through a combination of survey and case studies, analyzed experiences of river conversion in old industrial regions worldwide.

Also in close cooperation with the Emschergenossenschaft, the event “Transforming Urban Regions: Lessons from Turin and the Ruhr” was held in Turin in May, comparing the transformation processes of Turin and the Ruhr region.

The workshop “Transformation Talks - Urban Change from a Young Professionals' Perspective” also focused on this overarching topic: In June, the KoMet graduate network and the NRW Young Professionals' Forum of the ARL (Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association) invited young professionals, academics, students, and engaged citizens to participate in world-café format discussions and networking.

The central event of 2023 was once again the KoMet Day, this time with the title “Transformative Science - What Role Do Reallabs Have?” organized by Prof. Petra Schweizer-Ries (Bochum University of Applied Sciences) and Prof. Renée Tribble (TU Dortmund University), whose proposal won the competition to host the KoMet Day. About 100 participants from politics, science and practice engaged



in lively small-group dialogue at various thematic tables on topics such as “Transformation Accelerators? - Reallabs and the Mobility Transition”, and jointly developed new and sustainable design ideas for the metropolises of the future.

This year's Ruhr Lecture “The Ruhr Region – A Metropolis in Transformation” brought together the complementary expertise of the three UA Ruhr universities for international students and forms the basis for a volume of the same name, planned for 2024.

COMPETENCE FIELD ENERGY – SYSTEM – TRANSFORMATION (EST)

TRANSFORMING THE ENERGY SYSTEM FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The four pillars of energy supply are sustainability, security of supply, economic efficiency and acceptance. There is an urgent need for action in all of these areas. Climate change is forcing sustainability. Security of supply in the face of the international crisis is essential for the state, the economy and society. The comparatively high level of energy prices is damaging the industrial economy and thus our prosperity and ultimately the state's ability to act. In all of this, actions for transformation must be accepted by the citizens. These aspects give rise to our interdisciplinary research tasks in engineering and natural sciences, economics, social sciences, law and spatial planning. The competence field EST with all its disciplines conducts research in a number of interdisciplinary projects and appears publicly with its expertise in a variety of events.

In June 2023, representatives of EST enriched the 6th Dortmund Science Conference „Energy Future“ with keynotes. At the beginning of September, the 12th International Ruhr Energy Conference (IN-REC) took place in Essen. The main topic was „Uncertainty in energy - Markets, systems and decisions“. Another highlight was the HY.Summit.Rhein.Ruhr on hydrogen, organized by the economic development agencies in the Ruhr region with active contributions from many EST members.

Project workshops have brought EST's activities together with the relevant industry and professional public. Exemplary are two successfully conducted workshops in the project VeS-iMa on supply security and market development in Germany in a European context. In this project, an adequate assessment model for the security of supply of energy and, above all, electricity systems is being developed, which takes into account the interactions with the European electricity markets. A first workshop for an interdisciplinary master's program on Energy System Transformation, which is currently being planned, was successfully held with active industry participation.

The activities of the year 2023 impressively demonstrate how the competence field EST has successfully established itself in research, teaching and the public. The participants share the joy of working together on the various challenges for a future sustainable, economical and secure energy system with all its facets.



RESEARCH ACADEMY RUHR

PREPARATION FOR CAREER PATHS INSIDE ACADEMIA AND BEYOND

Research Academy Ruhr is firmly established as a central platform for supporting early career researchers. All year round, we focused on developing interdisciplinary skills, building networks, and providing guidance for career planning.

The range of events was tailored to the different needs and ever-changing challenges faced by early career researchers at the various stages of their development. Doctoral researchers at different phases of their doctorate were able to put together a personal program from practical workshops and discussion panels at the *Herbstakademie* and *Frühjahrsakademie* respectively. Topics included writing an exposé, financing the doctorate, and preparing for the doctoral defense. The year-round workshop program for postdocs and the *CoachingPLUS* format, for those already preparing for an appointment, focused on management and negotiation skills, acquiring third-party funding, and various aspects of career development.

In addition, several formats addressed specific issues and characteristics of diverse career paths: at *Research Career Day*, academics from various institutions provided information on the perspectives and requirements of a research career, while at *Wirtschaftskolleg*, UA Ruhr alumni holding a doctorate shared their experiences in business and society. In the *Dialogue* format, the participants discussed with Dr. Simone Kurz, CEO of the health insurance company VIACTIV, what staff development concept she uses to meet current challenges such as demographic change,

skills shortages, and technologization. The biannual *Karriereforum* for postdocs was dedicated to opportunities for third-party funding in the spring and career prospects in non-university research in the fall.

International exchange has flourished again following the pandemic-related challenges of recent years: As part of the *Research Explorer Ruhr*, 18 international researchers from nine countries came to the Ruhr region to get to know the German research landscape and explore joint project ideas with researchers from the UA Ruhr. The two-year *mentoring³* program, which combines mentoring with workshops and peer-networking opportunities, was launched in October. 44 female postdocs from all disciplines met in Essen to kick off the new program line.



COMPETENCE FIELD „EMPIRICAL ECONOMIC RESEARCH“

ADVANCEMENTS AND SYNERGIES IN EMPIRICAL ECONOMIC RESEARCH

The year 2023 marks another significant chapter for the field of ‚Empirical Economic Research‘ at the UA Ruhr, where collaboration in research and education was further strengthened and expanded.

The highlight of the year was a meeting of all participants at Ruhr-Universität Bochum in October. Work areas were jointly defined and consideration was given to how synergies can be utilized, for example by sharing data sources or the potential establishment of an ethics committee for economics. The role of artificial intelligence in research and teaching was also at the heart of the discussions.

The joint Master’s program ‚Econometrics‘ recorded a positive development with 38 first-time enrollments in the winter semester 23/24 and currently a total of 118 students, about 70% of whom are international and a third are female students.

The ‚Ruhr Graduate School in Economics‘ promoted internal and external networking and expertise in empirical economic research and econometric method development through several events and courses. In March, the annual RGS Doctoral Conference in Economics took place, with more than 100 presenters from 14 countries and renowned keynote speakers. The graduate program ‚Regional Disparities & Economic Policy‘ was successfully extended. Both programs welcomed new doctoral candidates and once again held a variety of workshops, research seminars, and mini-lectures with distinguished guest researchers.

To further promote young researchers, the DFG Graduate School ‚Cross-border Labour Markets‘ was established, which starts on April 1, 2024, and includes members of the competency field. Several researchers are involved in a DFG Transregio proposal (submitted by TUD and RUB) on the topic of ‚Spatio-temporal Statistics for the Transition of Energy and Transport‘. Following the successful evaluation of the draft proposal in April 2023, the full proposal will be submitted in December 2023. The inspection in spring 2024 marks the decisive step in the application process.

The latest studies and findings of competency field members are published in the Ruhr Economic Papers, a joint discussion paper series. These publications contribute to integrating research work into the scientific discourse and economic policy deliberations at an early stage and ensure the recognition of the researchers’ authorship.



© Competence Field Empirical Economic Research

LEHRAMTSSTIPENDIUM RUHR

POWERFUL SIGNAL FOR FAIR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In 2023, the UA Ruhr launched the development of the study profile for the 'Lehramtsstipendium Ruhr'. A broad alliance of foundations, universities and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia aims to recruit student teachers specifically for work at schools in challenging locations in the Ruhr region. To this end, the RAG Foundation and the Wübben Foundation for Education, together with the Ministry of Education and the UA Ruhr, have developed a scholarship program that provides students with financial support during their studies and at the same time systematically prepares them for work at schools in challenging situations.

The key points of the scholarship program are: Starting in 2024 and 2025, up to 140 students of various teaching professions at the three universities of the UA Ruhr will be supported with 300 euros per month during their bachelor's degree. The RAG Foundation is allocating more than 1.5 million euros for this purpose. The implementation of the program is coordinated by Ruhr University Bochum and supported by the Wübben Foundation Education, which also provides funding for networking among scholarship holders.

Lehramtsstipendium Ruhr includes a special study profile developed by UA Ruhr to prepare scholarship holders specifically for work at schools in challenging situations in addition to their regular teaching studies.



from left to right: Dr. Markus Warnke, Prof. Dr. Wiebke Möhring, Dorothee Feller, Bärbel Bergerhoff-Wodopia, Prof. Dr. Barbara Albert, Prof. Dr. Martin Paul

© Marcel Kusch

»With around 1,700 master's degrees in teaching each year, the UA Ruhr plays a major role in teacher training in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, both for the Ruhr region and beyond,« as the three universities involved explain. »Ruhr University Bochum, the University of Duisburg-Essen and TU Dortmund University are already cooperating very successfully in this area. A current example of this collaboration is the Ruhr Conference project 'talents4teachers/teachers4talents', which aims to inspire high school graduates from all backgrounds to study teaching and to support them as they enter university. With the Lehramtsstipendium Ruhr teaching scholarship, we can now make a further contribution to greater educational equity in the Ruhr region.«

Another great opportunity offered by the scholarship program is that, upon graduation from their master's program, the scholarship holders will complete their teacher training ("Referendariat") at a school in a challenging location in the Ruhr region. To this end, they will be given preference at the centers for practical teacher training in the Ruhr metropolitan region and will be specifically assigned to schools in challenging locations.

Lehramtsstipendium Ruhr
Deine Region. Deine Chance.



www.uaruhr.de

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN THE HUMANITIES (KWI)

2023 was marked by the initiation of excellent research at KWI. Two DFG projects made their start – one on the care of people suffering from dementia, and one on the visual language of influencers – along with a project on the history of the Burda company. The institute welcomed the exceptional success of an ERC Synergy Grant “Cryogenic Culture: Infrastructure, Politics and Sustainability of Artificial Cooling”, approved for six years with 10 million euros of funding. Stefan Höhne is the first cultural studies scholar in Europe to receive an ERC Synergy Grant. The grant was procured for the UDE and KWI, with a four-person team at further institutions.

In 2023, twelve international fellows, two fellows funded by the Thyssen Foundation, and four fellows of the Academy in Exile pursued their research at KWI. The high quality of applications shows that KWI has established itself on the map of Institutes for Advanced Study.

In the framework of the Afghanistan programme of the Academy in Exile, an exhibition with works by a photo artist from Afghanistan and another from Iran took place in Essen.

Many events as well as a series of articles on the KWI blog were related to the 2023 annual theme “Mehr oder Weniger|More or Less”. Highlights included an evening with researchers and non-fiction writers Steffen Mau and Ewald Frie, in addition to events with writers Judith Hermann and Felicitas Hoppe, and historian Friedrich Lenger.

A podium discussion in the spring shed light on the cancel culture debate and its implications for scholarly work, while a panel at the KWI writing weekend in the fall offered perspectives on advising conditions for doctoral students. Further events were devoted to the contested practice of science tracking by academic publishers, and the question of authorship in the time of Chat GPT.

At the Rhine Ruhr Center for Science Communication Research, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, Julika Griem is working on the strategies, sites, and functional logic of science communication; Sarah Tober is researching the use of the comic and humour to convey scholarly findings.

The constitution of a DFG network on “Das Komische als Kulturwissenschaft” (The Comic as a Cultural Science) at KWI anchors the comic – which has received little interdisciplinary attention thus far – as an aesthetically rich, socially relevant research topic.

Three new doctoral students joined the institute with funding for four years. Along with additional doctoral students in the research projects, they bolster this stage of qualification at KWI.



David Lauer



Discussion Cancel Culture



Discussion Mehr oder weniger Betreuung



Felicitas Hoppe Julika Griem Roxanne Phillips

AREA RUHR

With „East Asian Futures“, a new research training group in the humanities has been opened in the University Alliance Ruhr.

The humanities research training group „East Asian Futures: Visions and Realisations on National, Transregional and Global Scales“ was launched at the UA Ruhr in October 2023 with an initial seven international doctoral students.

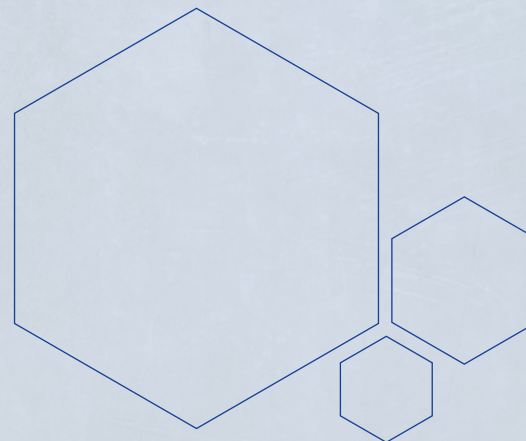
Funded by the DFG, the research training group is a joint project of East Asian Studies at RUB and UDE, which are successfully cooperating in the Alliance for Research on East Asia (AREA) Ruhr.

Over the next four years, the young researchers will explore East Asian ideas of the future in comparison to those in the Western world. Throughout the 20th century, East Asian visions of the future differed considerably from those of the West. Only since the beginning of accelerated globalisation in the 1980s have some trends developed in parallel. Today, the future of Germany, Europe and the world is strongly characterised by interaction with East Asia.

The doctoral theses being written at the Centre will explore how ideas about the future emerge, the conditions on which they are based and how they unfold in language, religion and ideology, the individual and society, resources and technology as well as sovereignty and government power. The young researchers are working on the concepts of the future in the foreign relations of East Asian countries. This includes self-assertion and identity, post-socialist

utopias in North Korea, as well as economic policy and planning in the early 20th century in China, Japan and Korea and cultural and religious-historical conceptions of the future in Buddhism and Confucianism.

» With doctoral students from Taiwan, China, Japan, Korea, Finland and Germany, the group has a very international focus,« says Prof Dr Christine Moll-Murata, spokesperson of the Research Training Group. The innovative potential of the programme lies in its interdisciplinary analytical framework, she explains further. This encompasses perspectives from the humanities and social sciences. *»This opens up a new field of research in East Asian studies that has not yet been analysed from a macro-regional perspective with a focus on modernity and the present.«* Co-speaker of the research group is Prof Dr Markus Taube.



Spokesperson Christine Moll-Murata (center), co-spokesperson Markus Taube and Vice-Rector Denise Manahan-Vaughan inaugurated the Research Training Group in a festive ceremony.



East Asian Futures

© Katja Marquard, RUB

RESEARCH TRAINING GROUP REGIONAL DISPARITIES

The DFG has approved another funding period for the RTG “Regional Disparities and Economic Policy” in 2023. This will continue the successful UA Ruhr collaboration in this joint Research Training Group.

The Ruhr area or Siegerland – only approximately 100 kilometers separate the two regions in NRW, yet the income, educational opportunities and health of the people living there differ considerably. Since 2019, the Research Training Group “Regional Inequality and Economic Policy” has been researching the causes, mechanisms and effects of this inequality. RUB and TU Dortmund University are involved in the project under the leadership of UDE.

Regional differences in living standards, participation and economic structure have often built up and become entrenched over a long period of time. This is evident from educational studies, opinion polls and election results. However, the questions about the causes, consequences and appropriate policy responses remain largely unanswered. *»Especially in times of rising nationalism and populism, it is immensely important to gain a better understanding of these differences and to derive well-founded political recommendations for action,«* says Tobias Seidel, spokesperson for Research Training Group (RTG) 2484 and Professor of Economics at UDE.

The ten participating professors from the University Alliance Ruhr contribute their knowledge from various fields of economics, such as labor markets, finance and macroeconomics. Together with five to seven new doctoral students each year, they form the RTG 2484. *»We use the latest methods of regional economics to analyze politically and economically relevant aspects – for example the housing market, the regional effects of the German minimum wage and the regional impact of the trade dispute between the USA and China,«* lists Seidel, explaining the specific focus of the research group. They have already shown that the regional employment effects of the minimum wage in Germany vary considerably, but that the minimum wage has also led to an equalization of wage distribution.

The doctoral students’ training includes lectures, research and soft skills seminars. Graduates are thus prepared for careers in academia, public institutions, the private sector as well as at national and international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank.



Research Training Group Regional Disparities and Economic Policy

LIASON OFFICE NEW YORK

The New York liaison office has proven instrumental in fortifying North American networks through strategic events. Among the notable successes are two flagship fellowship programs: the Ruhr Fellowship Program, supported in part by the Max Kade Foundation, and the Transatlantic Ruhr Fellowship program, hosting a total of 18 fellows (9 each).

The initiatives of the office extended to prominent conferences like the DWIH Spotlight ,Future Forum' and ,Quantum Summit' at NYU, showcasing UA Ruhr's dedication to diverse platforms and strengthening ties in education, research, and innovation. In the realm of Entrepreneurship, UA Ruhr developed impactful initiatives, such as a feature in University World News, an exploration of Public-Private Partnerships and Transatlantic Cooperation at the „Maximizing Impact: Academia and Entrepreneurship“ panel with Lehigh University.

The New York office engaged UDE alumnus and current faculty at St. John's University at the Informal Networks in International Business and collaborated with the Korean Consulate in New York and

1014 – Space for Ideas. In the topic Science Diplomacy and Academic Freedom, we curated the exhibition „What We Brought With Us“ with Goethe-Institut and organized a panel discussion “Objects of Resilience: Exploring Symbolic Weight of Refugee Things” alongside the Humanities in Exile Symposium at University of Cincinnati where we developed further partnership plans in the Planning department.

Some notable delegations in 2023 were, RUB Worldfactory and UDE Anglophone Studies in New York City and TU Dortmund University at Lehigh University. Engagement at conferences and fairs marked a robust presence, with workshops at the German American International Network (GAIN) conference, participation in “NAFSA Annual Conference,” “Germany Grad Fairs,” “Research in Germany,” and more. The comprehensive representation at various platforms underscores UA Ruhr's commitment to fostering academic collaborations and advancing global engagement, further solidifying its pivotal role in transatlantic partnerships.



Future Forum Night Labs



Germany Today Dortmund



Career Booster Europe New York

LIAISON OFFICE EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (EECA)

In 2023, the concept of science diplomacy played a central role in the activities of the EECA office. The „Fedor Stepun Scholarship“ for scientists at risk, which was successfully established at RUB in 2022 and arose from the collaboration with the Zimin Foundation, was extended to TU Dortmund University and the UDE this year.

The cooperation with the Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom led to the first Summer School of Journalism in Germany in July, which was attended by 35 endangered and persecuted journalists. The Seminar for Slavic Studies at RUB and the Erich Brost Institute at TU Dortmund University were among those involved in implementing the content of the summer school. The summer school was featured in a Voice of America documentary.

In November and June, the EECA Office supported the organization of the moving photo exhibition Bachmut in Bochum by photographer Victoria Ivleva, as well as the discussions with the artist.

Another major topic in 2023 was the contact and initiation trips that the staff undertook as part of the BMBF delegation. During the visits to Moldova, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, declarations of intent for cooperation between the respective ministries were renewed. Among other things, the UA Ruhr actively participated in the German-Kazakh and German-Uzbek Science Days.

A particular highlight of the activities of the office in the EECA region is the event GO EAST: New Perspectives and New Connections - Central Asia and the South Caucasus, which took place at RUB on November 28 + 29. This event was an initiative of the Chair of International Political Economy of East Asia (RUB) and the cooperation with the Liaison Office. The central act of the event was a panel discussion on international university cooperation, in which rectors from Ruhr University Bochum, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Georgia took part.

Through the StudyBridge program, which continues to be managed by the Liaison Office, more than 60 applicants were accepted at the universities of the UA Ruhr.

For the first time since 2019, the EECA Office organized a STEM Academy in-person at all three universities, which brought a total of 40 participants from the USA, EECA, Southeast Asia and South America to the Ruhr region.

The second major event for the program's alumni took place in November, this time at TU Dortmund University.



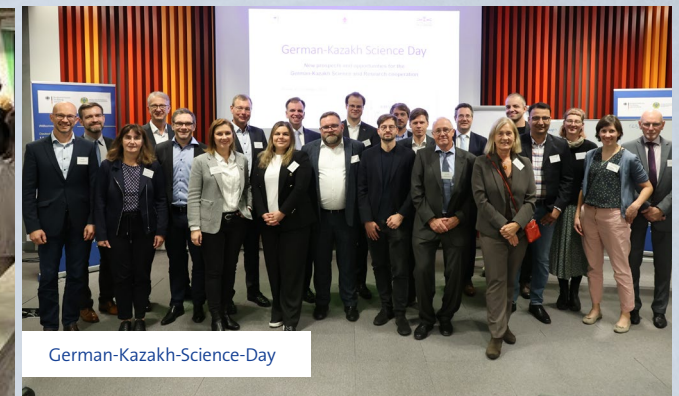
Organizer Elena Resch (left) and Rector Martin Paul are delighted about Zhanna Nemtsova's visit to Ruhr University Bochum – pictured here at the opening of the Summer School.

© Katja Marquard, RUB



Exhibition Bachmut

© E. Dozhina, DW



German-Kazakh-Science-Day

MERCATOR RESEARCH CENTER RUHR (MERCUR)

Funding for cooperative research projects

This year, the *Mercator Research Center Ruhr* (MERCUR) has funded ten projects by scientists from the UA Ruhr universities with a volume of € 1,033,000. In the funding line *MERCUR Sprint*, which aims to support the preparation of particularly promising collaborative projects submitted to the DFG, six projects were funded with more than €190,000. In the funding line *MERCUR Cooperation*, four projects were granted with a total volume of over € 840,000. The cooperative projects range from researching synthetic nucleic acid systems, photocatalytic disinfection, and the disruption of stars to structural change in regional labor markets.

Concluding the Global Young Faculty

In March 2023, the closing event for the seventh cohort of the Network for young UA Ruhr scientists on their career path – *Global Young Faculty* (GYF) – took place in the Erich Brost Pavilion at Zeche Zollverein. The four GYF working groups presented their research projects on the topics of science communication, digitalization, health justice and local living environments in the Ruhr region. The re-

sults led to scientific and non-scientific publications as well as a series of public events. This GYF cohort also marked the end of the program’s funding by *Stiftung Mercator* after more than 10 years. Both current and former members felt that their participation in the GYF was an honor that fostered the spirit of interdisciplinary work and encouraged young scientists to remain curious. The GYF was not only a program to initiate and carry out projects with societal relevance but is also a starting point for further joint research and thus an important part for their (future) careers.



MERCUR Club

MERCUR Club

This year’s MERCUR Club took place in July on the premises of *Stiftung Mercator*. After the opening speech by Prof. Dr. Ulrich Herbert, Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board, and the keynote speech by Prof. Dr. Julia Tjus (Ruhr University Bochum), nine MERCUR-funded researchers presented their exciting research projects to a broad audience. The rectorates of the three universities as well as numerous colleagues and strategic partners of the UA Ruhr used the opportunity to network after the program. The MERCUR Club thus remains an important component of developing collaborative ideas within the University Alliance.



Global Young Faculty VII Closing Event



MERCUR Club

10TH CEO DIALOG

The focus of the 2023 anniversary edition of the CEO Dialog was on economic and capital market scenarios.

The answer to the question of whether the German 'business model' is still competitive in the face of the challenges in the real and financial economy was: Germany must make an effort to remain internationally competitive – but it can be done. The participants in the now well-established format, which was organized by the UA Ruhr and the Initiativkreis Ruhr in June in a packed lecture hall at Ruhr University Bochum, discussed what is needed to achieve this goal.

Dr. Joachim Nagel, President of the Bundesbank, and Dr. Gertrud R. Traud, Chief Economist at Helaba, provided the impetus for the approximately 200 participants. Rolf Buch, CEO of Vonovia SE, and Christian Kullmann, CEO of Evonik Industries AG, took part in the subsequent panel discussion with the speaker. The high-caliber event was once again organized and moderated by Professor Stephan

Paul from the Institute for Credit and Finance at Ruhr University Bochum as part of the "ikf°impulse" series. It took place under the motto "deutsche wirtschaft wohin?" (German economy to where?) and addressed the challenges that require attention and strategic thinking due to changing geopolitical conditions and monetary upheavals.

According to Jochim Nagel, a sufficiently high interest rate level and further interest rate hikes are necessary to combat inflation: *»From today's perspective, several more interest rate hikes are necessary,«* says Nagel. This will be the case *»until it is clear that we will reach our two percent inflation target in the near future.«* Gertrud R. Traud took a contrary view – thus providing stimulating material for discussion – when she predicted the following with regard to the typical course of past inflation rates: *»Inflation will not remain at this level for long, but will drop quickly – namely within the next few quarters.«*

And so the course was set for an exciting discussion round: Topics included the transformation driver inflation, whose strength and duration is difficult to predict, as well as the role and situation of the economy, whose challenges and solution strategies were discussed by Christian Kullmann and Rolf Buch using the real estate and chemical industries as examples.

The CEO Dialogue is a series of events organized by the UA Ruhr and the Initiativkreis Ruhr. It brings together students and managers from the Ruhr region to discuss current issues.



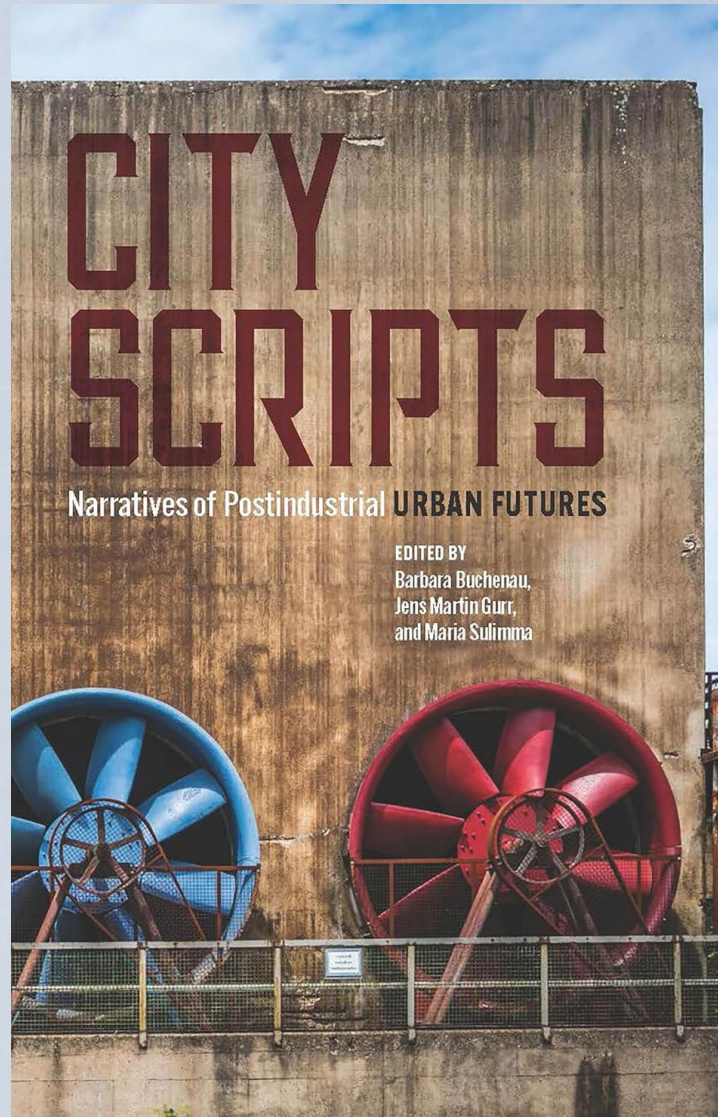
from left to right: Stephan Paul, Joachim Nagel, Gertrud R. Traud, Rolf Buch, Christian Kullmann

RUHRCENTER FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

The RuhrCenter of American Studies is a multidisciplinary hub for humanities research and graduate education on North America. It hosts a graduate research group funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, organizes the annual PhD Forum in American Studies and runs a joint PhD program. This year, the RUB initiated a new research day for postdocs and faculty.

The year 2023 was a year of successful completion and of generational transmission at the RuhrCenter of American Studies. Not only did a number of doctoral researchers move forward on successfully completing the RuhrCenter's doctoral program in transnational and transatlantic American studies. A habilitation on ambiguity on colonial and early national North America was also completed by Dr. Elena Furlanetto and three new professors joined the Center: Laura Bieger (RUB), Florian Freitag (UDE) and Sascha Pöhlmann (TUDo).

The Center's graduate research group *Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures* (<https://www.uni-due.de/cityscripts/>), funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (2018-2023), celebrated the official release by Ohio State UP of its jointly authored book *City Scripts: Narratives of Postindustrial Urban Futures*, edited by Barbara Buchenau, Jens Martin Gurr, and Maria Sulimma (open access). This book explores how storytelling shapes the predominant view of the cities in the Ruhr region and in American legacy cities, showing how narrative agency helps to legitimize histories as much as future plans and new understandings of the urban. *City Scripts* responds



to calls by literary theorists to engage in a novel kind of narrative analysis that recalibrates close reading and interpretation to the multiple ways in which narratives “do things”—how they intervene in the world and take action in everyday life. A multidisciplinary cast of contributors approaches cities through the stories people tell about them, looking especially at political activism and urban planning, since both depend on the invention of plausible stories of connectedness and the promise of a redemptive future. As Erin James, the author of *Narrative in the Anthropocene* (2022), points out: *»City Scripts reenergizes discussions at the intersection of urban studies and literary and cultural studies. Innovatively reading material spaces using narratological tools developed through the analysis of fictional texts, it will be a rich and productive resource for scholars across disciplines.«*

NEW CONTINUING EDUCATION MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In order to train specialists for the energy transition in North Rhine-Westphalia, the UA Ruhr plans to establish four new master's degree programs for international students. To this end, the UA Ruhr is joining forces with the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences. The English-language courses will be based at the EUREF Campus in Düsseldorf, where companies from the region will be working on the future topics of energy, mobility and sustainability as of 2024. The four universities are now creating the necessary structures to enable enrollment for the first time in the winter semester of 2025/26. The plan is to offer up to 120 places per year from 2030.

Three of the four planned master's programs will deepen knowledge in industrial engineering, providing specialized knowledge on sustainable solutions for energy systems, construction and mobility. Another engineering degree program will be dedicated to renewable energy technologies with a focus on hydrogen.

The Rectorates of the four universities have now commissioned the Academy of the Ruhr-Universität gGmbH to coordinate the start-up phase. *»We are looking forward to the socially highly relevant task of setting up new degree courses for international students to meet the specialized requirements of energy system transformation,«* says Managing Director Dr. Yves Gensterblum enthusiastically. Professor Martin Faulstich from the Faculty of Spatial Planning at TU Dortmund University is responsible for the overall scientific management of the courses. A wide range of research collaborations with local companies will also be developed. Located at Düsseldorf Airport's long-distance train station, the campus will open in 2024 and is expected to provide space for up to 4,000 employees from established companies and start-ups to innovate in the energy transition.

»As a member of the UA Ruhr, we want to use this commitment to help master the energy transition in the country,« says Professor Manfred Bayer, Rector of TU Dortmund University. *»To counter the growing shortage of skilled workers, it is essential that our courses have an international focus,«* adds Professor Martin Paul, Rector of Ruhr University Bochum. Professor Barbara Albert, Rector of the University of Duisburg-Essen, adds: *»Robust transfer from basic research to collaborative projects with industrial companies will lead to innovations that have a sociopolitical impact and radiate into the region.«*



MakerSpace



Atrium O-Werk



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MakerSpace

FISU WORLD UNIVERSITY GAMES

FIVE UA RUHR STUDENTS WIN SILVER MEDAL IN THE GERMAN ROWING EIGHT

At the FISU World University Games, which took place in Chengdu, China, in August, three students from TU Dortmund and two students from Ruhr-Universität Bochum won the silver medal in the rowing eight. Lukas Föbinger, David Keefer and Leon Schandl (TU Dortmund) as well as Henry Hopmann and Tom Tewes (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) are very happy with their performance in the exciting race and are impressed by the FISU Games, the world's second-largest multisport event after the Olympic Games.

The German eight got off to a good start and pushed forward with intermediate sprints. The team was able to secure second place stroke for stroke, being beaten only by the strong Dutch team. »The

students from the Netherlands prepared for the event for a year and couldn't be defeated,« says Leon Schandl (24), who is completing his bachelor's degree in civil engineering at TU Dortmund University. »We were able to bump the Chinese team down to third place thanks to a strong team effort.« Alongside his fellow students David Keefer (23), who is studying for a bachelor's degree in economics, and Lukas Föbinger (26), who is currently writing his master's thesis in chemistry, Schandl can now enjoy the FISU Games closing ceremony.

The five University Alliance Ruhr students made up the majority of the team. Friedrich Dunkel (Universität Hamburg), Henning Köncke (Medical School Hamburg), Till Martini (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Rene Schmela (Ruhr West University of Applied Sciences) rounded off the German crew. The team had to overcome some challenges – rowing in an unfamiliar boat provided by the organizer, and extreme humidity and high temperatures. »Under these circumstances, their performance should be commended even more,« says Christoph Edeler, head of Dortmund University Sports, who is also in Chengdu as a member of the German team's delegation. »The event is exceeding all expectations. Everything here is simply gigantic and perfectly organized. Nothing is left to chance.«

Since 28 July, a total of 6,500 student athletes from 119 nations in 18 sports have been competing for medals in Chengdu. For the German team, there are 160 outstanding student athletes at the starting line, making them one of the largest teams at the event.

In 2025, the FISU World University Games will take place in the Ruhr and Rhine regions: A great opportunity for our UA Ruhr athletes to compete for medals again - then right on their own doorstep.



Rowing eight, Germany: Henry Hopmann, Lukas Föbinger, Henning Köncke, Leon Schandl, Tom Tewes, David Keefer, Friedrich Dunkel, René Schmela, Till Martini.

**WE
WISH
YOU A
HAPPY
AND
PROSPEROUS
2024!**

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