



Southwestphalia

Selected information on the region and findings from research in Siegen-Wittgenstein

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Virtual 2021 EURECO Conference

Siegen

02nd – 03rd December 2021

Southwestphalia

- Federal State of Northrhine-Westphalia
- Region of Westphalia
- Southern part of the former province of Westphalia
- Not strictly defined as a region



Districts and population

- Southwestphalia consists of Districts Olpe, Hochsauerlandkreis, Soest, Märkischer Kreis and Siegen-Wittgenstein (Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Arnsberg, Hagen & Siegen, 2017)
- 1.4 Million inhabitants (31.12.2015); 7.8 % of population of NRW
- Shrinking region: Population minus 4.6 % between 2005 and 2015

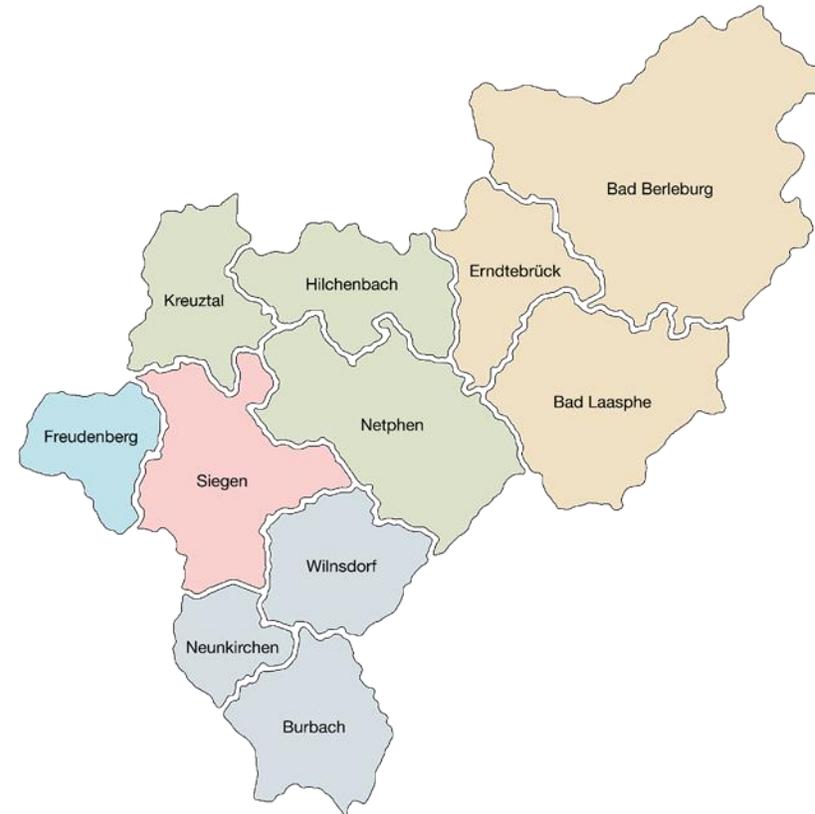


A region beyond metropolises

- **No metropolises like in the Rhineland area**
- **Biggest cities are Hagen (188.687 inh.), Iserlohn (91.815 inh.), Lüdenscheid (71.911 inh.), Arnsberg (76.487 inh.) and Siegen (101.943 inh.) (31.12.2020)**
- **Cities characterized by an urban core with rural surroundings with a village character (e. g. Siegen-Feuersbach with 398 inh.) (31.12.2016)**
- **But yet: Southwestphalia is highly industrialized and an industrial region of great importance for NRW as a whole**

Siegen-Wittgenstein

- Typical example for a district with mixed urban-rural structure in Northrhine-Westphalia (cf. Schädler et al, 2019, p. 10)
- 275.491 inh. (31.12.2021)
- Area: 1.132,89 km²
- 11 cities and municipalities with the largest by pop. being Siegen and the smallest by pop. being Erndebrück
- Fun fact: Bad Berleburg is among the Top 30 of Germany's largest cities (by area)



Importance of infrastructure

- **Infrastructure as a challenge for people in the region and for social service provision**
- **Example: Transportation in the Wittgenstein area (cf. Schädler et al. 2020, pp. 15-16)**
- **No expressways or highways, sometimes very long travel times, for example to Siegen; local public transport mainly operates within the area of Wittgenstein**
- **Long travel times affect service users as well as the general population...**
- **... and social service providers that want to reach their clients**

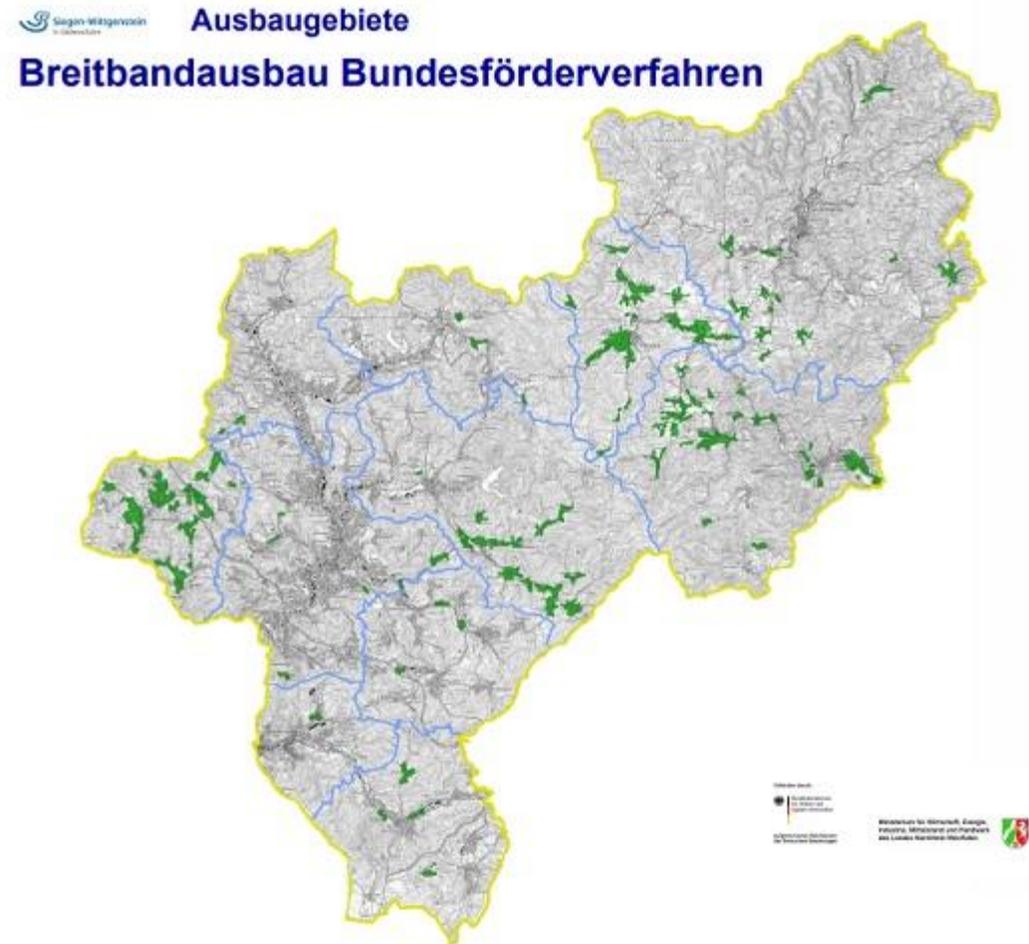
Digital infrastructure

Option: Increasing use of digital media

But: Persistent gaps in broadband and mobile coverage

Current expansion of the broadband network (see figure)

A reason to be skeptical?



Ongoing broadband rollout in Siegen-Wittgenstein (December 2020)
(Source: District of Siegen-Wittgenstein)

Internet usage in social service contexts in Erndtebrück

	Fully agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Do not agree	Missing
The Internet is of great importance to me personally when it comes to information about social services.	96 41.6 %	79 34.2 %	28 12.1 %	28 12.1%	51
The information on the Internet about social services in E. is helpful.	22 11.0 %	80 40.0 %	65 32.5 %	33 16.5%	82
I would like to see support to make better use of the Internet in terms of social services. to make better use of the Internet.	43 19.6 %	64 29.2 %	56 25.6 %	56 25.6 %	63
I would welcome a greater expansion of Internet-based information and assistance services.	82 44.1 %	74 39.8 %	14 7.5 %	16 8.6 %	96

Source: Schädler et al. (2019, p. 57), n=282

Theses and open questions

- **Internet usage in the context of social service seeking and usage was of importance for people in the region already in 2018**
- **Existing digital offers do not yet fully fit the needs of the target groups in the region**
- **Expansion of Internet-based offerings largely welcomed by people in the region**
- **Open question: What was the impact of the ad hoc digitalization of many areas of life during the COVID-19 pandemic? How sustainable will it be?**
- **In other words, what did we learn from pandemic times?**

Thank you very much for your attention!

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