

Regional Park Saar Final Report



1. Project name: The urban landscape as a place of work and production

As a result of the transnational SAUL project the masterplan for the Regional Park Saar was developed (www.regionalpark.saarland.de). A central theme of the masterplan is to tap into the potential of 'the urban landscape as place of work and production'. Open spaces in urban landscapes are not only places for relaxation, recreation and cultural events; they also offer jobs. Examples from a number of themes – biomass production, tourism and regional development – were worked through, identifying the principal concepts and main actions to be taken.

2. Name of SAUL2EXT partner organisations

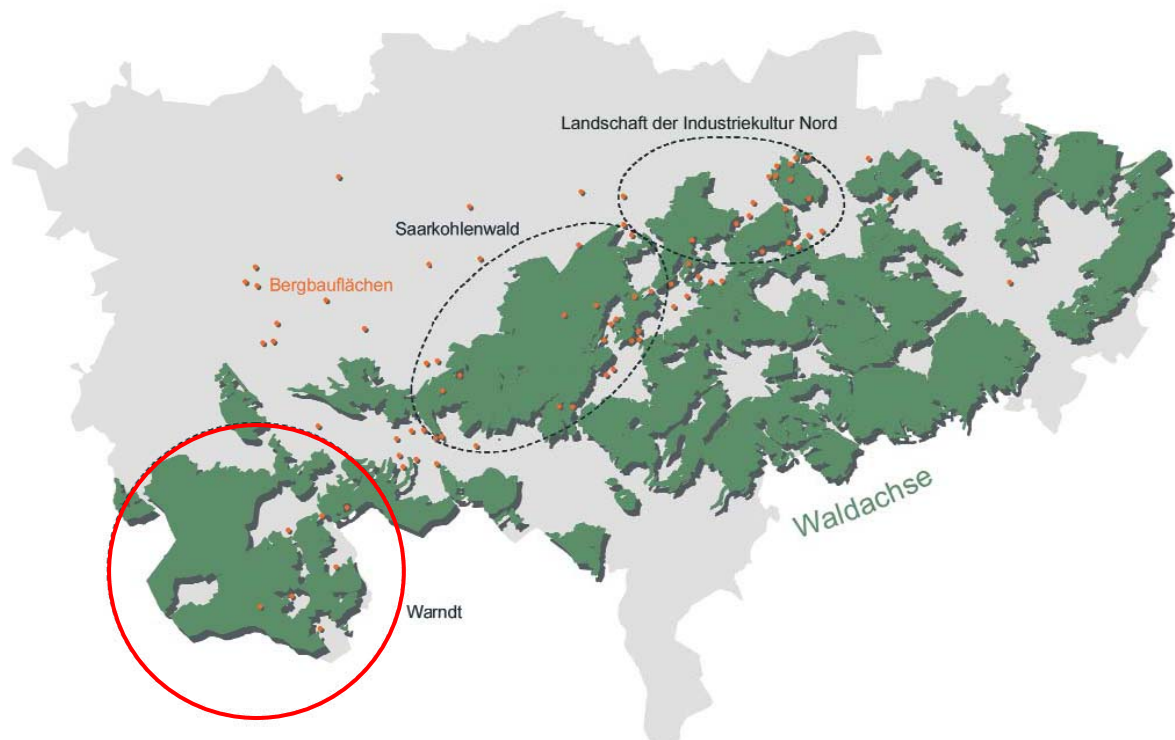
The regional SAUL project is led by the Spatial Planning Department of the Saarland Ministry of the Environment. A strong regional partnership supports the project implementation: the Forestry Department, the City of Saarbrücken, the Saarbrücken Association of Local Authorities (Regionalverband Saarbrücken), the German Coal Mining Company (DSK), the MGG Montan-Grundstücksgesellschaft mbH / SaarProjekt, the IndustrieKultur Saar GmbH, and the AZB, Ausbildungszentrum Burbach.

3. Detailed project description

3.1 Regional Context & Policy Environment

As an old-industrial and economically weak region, the image of the Saar conurbation is still shaped by mining and heavy industry. The patchwork of abandoned mining areas and suburban settlements often lacks aesthetic and functional qualities – decisive factors for the quality of life in a region. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis revealed that the urban landscape in Saarland is primarily green! The forestland forms the green backbone of the urban region. This is where there are also many mining relics. The rich natural and industrial heritage is a main point of reference for the transformation process which aims at new qualities in the urban landscape.

To support the large scale restructuring process, the Regional Park Saar was set up as a new and informal spatial instrument on state level which aims at setting new standards for pro-active urban landscape development. The challenge is to create new qualities in the urban landscape, to improve the accessibility of existing open spaces, and to change abandoned mining and industrial areas into new key nodes and attractive living spaces. The main idea is to implement governance networks beyond traditional administrative structures reflecting the scope of action of regional and local players and combining their resources within joint projects on a regional scale.



The three project areas of the Regional Park Saar: Saarkohlenwald, Warndt and Northern Landscape of Industrial Culture

Beyond those main project areas, the Regional Park Saar focuses on specific key issues, for example to foster “cross-border cooperation” or to explore the potential of **“the urban landscape as a place of work”**.

Open spaces in urban landscapes can act as leisure or cultural areas but also as work-spaces. The Regional Park Saar wants to reinforce the idea of the urban landscape as a place of work. Within the first implementation phase of the SAUL project, Forestry is given a special role: the concept of **Urban Forestry** was developed together with the forestry team for the pilot project Saarkohlenwald, which combines the traditional business of timber production with new service sector activities in the urban landscape. Contemporary forestry and agriculture play a decisive role in terms of integrating urban and cultural usages, future maintenance and management systems for open spaces on a regional scale. Forestry and agriculture can make a significant contribution to the creation of a region-specific identity.

Within SAUL2EXT this approach has been extended to further fields of action:

1. Urban landscape as a place for training and education
2. Urban landscape and its potential for tourism and regional development
3. Energy generation from urban landscapes

Case study projects and several actions have addressed these main issues.

3.2 Description of the sites and the work undertaken

Warndt is a cross-border region but nevertheless the border still is a physic and mental reality. The part in Saarland is a densely forested area with small settlements. This part is “the green heart” between the conurbation on the French side and the densely populated Saar valley on the German side. With the closure of the Warndt/Luisenthal pit in 2005, the mining era in this region came to an end. In order to discuss forthcoming changes with those concerned at an early date, the first citizens’ workshop “Future Warndt” was held in November 2004, with over 120 citizens participating, including French residents. This resulted in the restructuring concept “Future Warndt”, at the heart of which is an action programme defining concrete options, projects and measures and setting clear priorities. One of the most important projects is the development of the large mining site Tagesanlage Warndt itself.

Due to the peripheral situation the economic development perspectives are not very promising. Therefore, the action programme “Future Warndt” emphasises a small-scale regional development based on the endogenous potential of this cross-border (sub)region. The action programme in itself has six strands:

1. *Strength through partnership* covers aspects of inter-municipal cooperation, participation and cross-border activities
2. *Lively villages* aims at strengthening the settlements, the infrastructure and local communities
3. *Economic impulses* focus on the development of both the local economy and brownfield development
4. *Green Warndt* seeks to develop the leisure potential and quality of life
5. *Youth in Warndt* involves specific campaigns to attract young people and encourage their involvement
6. *Warndt and its image* aims at strengthening and sharpening the image of the Warndt both internally and externally

Most SAUL2EXT case study and action projects support several strands of the actions programme and thus contribute to a sustainable regional development:

3.2.1 Urban landscape as a place for training and education

One of the main results of the “Future Warndt” concept was that the possibilities for young people to find an employment in this area are limited. Young people tend to leave the Warndt after graduating from school. Thus, the concept emphasised the necessity of youth projects. As a SAUL2EXT action project, a **youth conference** was held in November 2007 in order to motivate young people to identify own projects referring to the Warndt and its urban landscape. The youth conference was strongly supported from the mayors of the participating municipalities and was a great success. In 2008 first youth projects (barrier-free playgrounds, football areas, theatre workshop etc.) will be implemented. The next youth conference is planned to be held late 2008 or early 2009.



Impressions from the youth conference in November 2007

Students from different study branches such as architecture, landscape architecture, and tourism received **practical training on urban landscape design**. These projects and competitions encouraged the students' involvement on how to design urban landscapes and parks and develop sustainable solutions for specific infrastructure requirements in the public realm. The best students' projects were awarded prizes.

The students' project "Pimp My Park" aimed at developing a mobile Regional Park pavilion. The task was to show very flexible and manageable but also well-designed solutions. The pavilion is supposed to accompany different events throughout the urban landscape. With its specific design the pavilion should attract people and provide them with information and inspiring presentations.



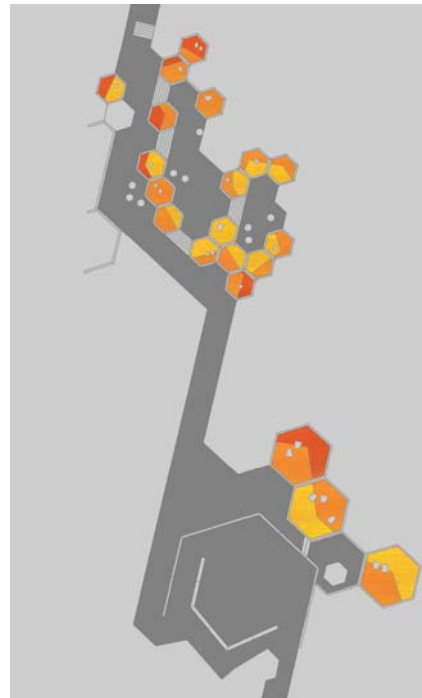
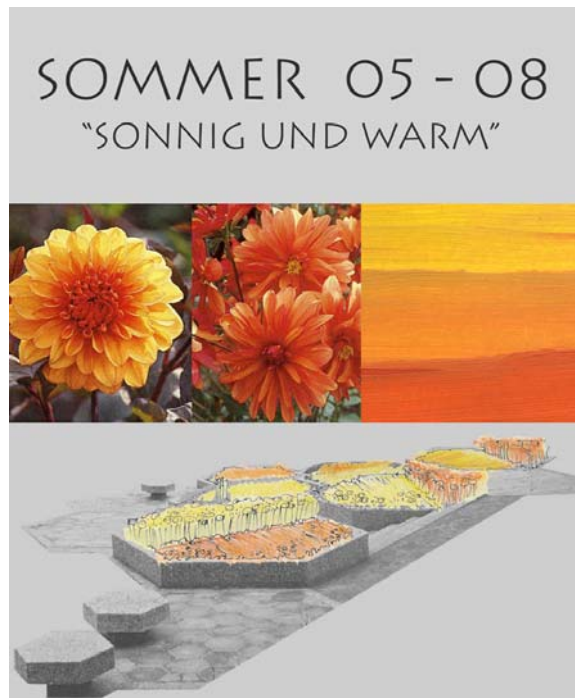
Presentation of students' concepts for a mobile Regional Park pavilion

Two other projects were linked to this practical training initiative: a students' project for a garden pavilion in the German French Garden (Deutsch-Französischer Garten) and a competition for a garden module. The German French Garden, near the French border, is one of the main garden heritage sites of Saarbrücken. It is situated next to a deprived neighbourhood and is threatened by vandalism. Nevertheless, the garden is very popular with the Saarbrücken's residents. The strategy of the Saarbrücken green space department is to continually improve the park's heritage through contemporary landscape design and infrastructure projects. This regeneration process as well as the maintenance of the garden provides a broad field for training and employment.



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The current and the new garden pavilion in the German French Garden (Deutsch-Französischer Garten): the next steps towards realisation have been prepared within the framework of a feasibility study.



The competition for the garden module “Silberhorn” in the German French Garden (Deutsch-Französischer Garten) aimed at new concepts for renovation and conservation of the hexagonal flowerbeds.

On the basis of previous experiences with guest-guides, for example in the field of industrial culture or garden heritage, an **advanced guest-guide training programme for urban parks** was developed. This module comprises aspects such as

- information about natural and cultural heritage
- history of garden and landscape architecture
- history of specific heritage sites
- innovative approaches to staging heritage sites and guiding theme-oriented tours

The test phase of this newly developed module was a success. The participants graduated with a certificate from the Saarland tourist office. In spring the first guided tours will be available for visitors.

3.2.2 Urban landscape and its potential for tourism and regional development

The Warndt area with its vast forests and old mining sites is comparatively unspectacular in terms of natural beauty or landscape scenery. Nevertheless, the woodlands and small settlements show potential for residential and leisure areas closely related to the Saar valley and Saarbrücken. The open spaces, heritage sites (e.g. Karlsbrunn castle) and mining sites can be seen as assets for regional development. The region offers tourist potential – not only for local and regional visitors but also for visitors staying overnight: First of all, the neighbouring world heritage site “Völklingen Steel Works” and the “Carreau Wendel” on the French side. And with these locations as core areas, the story of coal mining and steel production can be told, including social, cultural and ecological aspects. With the high speed trains this is just a couple of hours away from both Frankfurt and Paris.

Beside the revitalisation of the Warndt mining site (see below) several mostly small-scale local projects try to make use of this potential. Within the framework of SAUL2EXT different approaches were promoted.

The specific topography of Warndt – the area is very flat – was the decisive aspect when it came to the idea of a **barrier-free urban landscape**. In doing so, the disadvantage of a not very diversified landscape could be turned into an asset for further development and into a “unique selling point”. As a first step a concept for a barrier-free hiking trail network in the Warndt area has been worked out. This hiking trail concept addresses new target groups such as disabled and elder people as well as families with young children. It improves the accessibility of attractive and close-to-nature leisure areas for these target groups. A workshop with planners, foresters, and disabled young people contributed to mutual understanding and social inclusion. The realisation is supported by the state-owned company SaarForst and the city of Völklingen.



Due to its specific topography, the Warndt area is appropriate for a barrier-free hiking trail network.

A lot of information is accessible via the German-French website www.warndt.eu which was started in SAUL and continued in SAUL2EXT. More than 200 German and French partners, organisations and associations have already contributed to over 850 web-pages. With the calendar of events, the forum, the interactive map, the functions “greetings telegram” and “news” the website is an attractive platform for cross-border cooperation and public involvement. The website promotes initiatives such as the „Warndt Weekend“, the regional tourism fair and the cross-border hiking network throughout the Warndt area.

In Saarland, hiking is a key issue in the context of leisure activities and tourism. As alternative or addition to the traditional map and cartographic information **the GPS-based technology of orientation and spatial information** – already broadly available in car navigation – shall be adopted **for hiking and biking tourism**. In a test phase the digital maps and trail information was prepared to run on modern GPS-handhelds, palmtops and smartphones. The information for the Saarkohlenwald trails – created within the framework of the SAUL project – is available via the SAUL-funded website www.saarkohlenwald.de. Further trails, e.g. comprising trails throughout the cross-border Warndt-area, will follow. In cooperation with the Volkshochschule Regionalverband Saarbrücken a workshop for "GPS-based navigation for hikers and bikers" took place in order to promote the dissemination of this new approach.

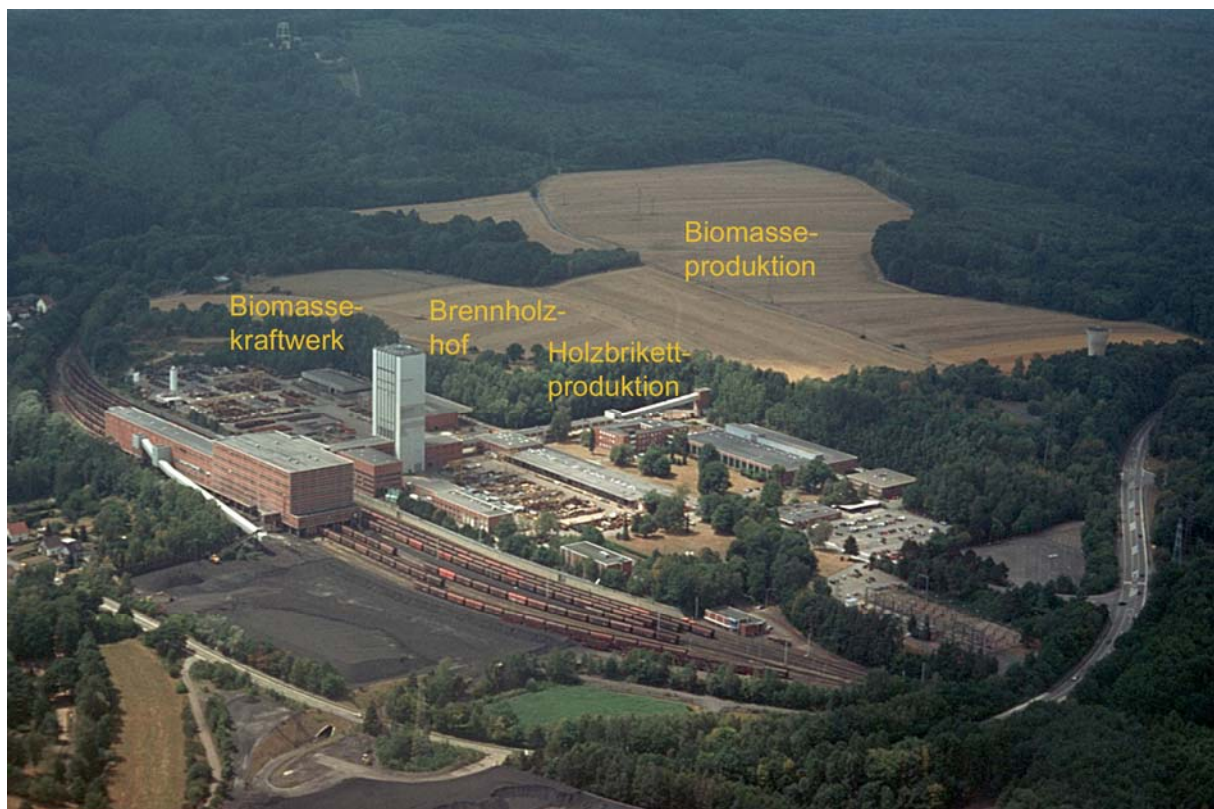
The project prepares in an innovative way a new key technology for broad application in regional tourism and thus helps to raise the attraction of the region. It gives additional value to the products promoted by the European Union in SAUL, increasing and qualifying its accessibility.

3.2.3 Energetic use of urban landscapes

The case study in this field was dedicated to identifying the potential for biomass production in the urban landscape. Moreover, this was the 'Headline Issue' that the Joint Planning Group has addressed.

The principal aim of the European energy policy – apart from addressing climate change – is to successfully manage and secure investments in the Energy market. Consequently, 20% of the gross energy consumption should be obtained from renewable sources by the year 2020 (Source: Renewable Energy Road Map & Strategic European Energy Review 2007). Germany has seen continued increases in the cultivation of biomass. However, there are also numerous associated risks: the reduction of soil nutrients and increase in soil acidity in forest ecosystems; the competition between the timber and firewood industries; the competition between the foodstuff and energy crops industries; or the repercussions of biomass cultivation on the aesthetic dimension of landscape.

In the Warndt, one of the main Regional Park project areas (see above), the decommissioning of the Warndt/Luisenthal mining site in the summer of 2004 opened up the chance to explore new subsequent usages linked to sustainable energy production. A biomass power plant using timber from the surrounding region, a firewood briquette plant, and firewood yard are planned. The main bulk of biomass to satisfy the biomass needs of the power plant (2000 tonnes) will come from timber stocks; only around 10% of the biomass would come from short-rotation coppice.



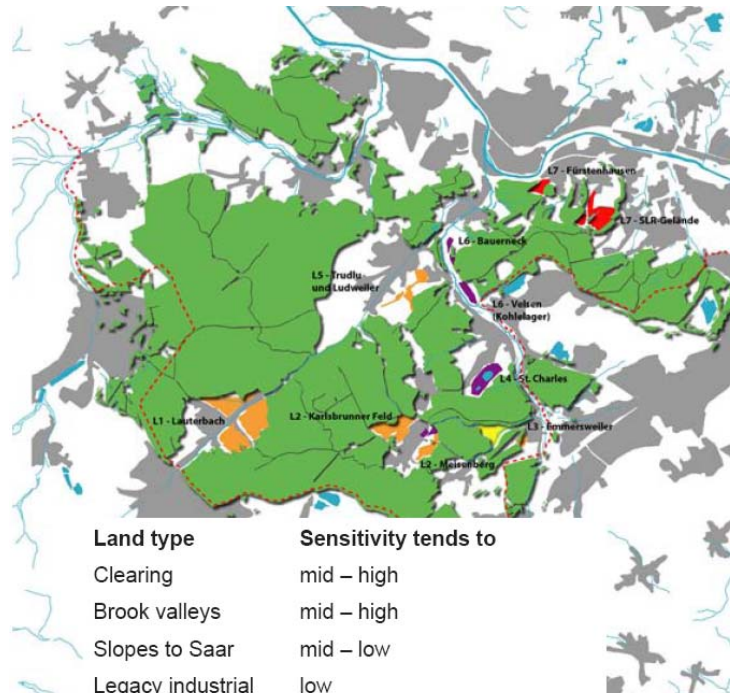
The former mining site Warndt is supposed to be turned into a centre for expertise in wood usage (biomass power plant, firewood yard, production of wood briquettes).

The main tasks of the case study were

- to review the ecological parameters and requirements
- to calculate the economic benefits
- to search suitable locations for the biomass plantations (short-rotation coppice)
- to assess the impact of biomass cultivation on the landscape and to identify possible designs for the plantations

In terms of ecological and economic sustainability the results of the expertise show that the cultivation of poplars in 3 year rotation is strongly recommended. In sensitive parts of the clearing the co-cultivation of willows is recommended, in order to win acceptance from the local population and to achieve integration into the landscape.

Working on the basis that the total land available (area of property) is 272 hectares, and assuming a yield of 11 – 16 dry tonnes per hectare per annum, a biomass procurement of between 2,800 and 4,100 dry tonnes per annum can be calculated.



Tandem strategy: Energy forest integrated in the cultural landscape; violet: legacy industrial areas; red: slopes to Saar and edges of Warndt; yellow: brook valleys; orange: clearings in the context of settlements

Considering the aesthetic and landscape dimension the short-rotation biomass production in the Warndt area on what was once agricultural land could potentially change the natural scenery, and is indeed perceived in this way by various stakeholders. Therefore, the sensitivity of the characteristic landscape at each individual location in the Warndt area was examined. Three levels of sensitivity – low, medium and high – indicate the integration measures required at each location. A portfolio of integration measures are recommended for locations with high or medium sensitivity.



Trial locations Karlsbrunner Feld / Meisenberg, Velsen / Bauerneck in Rosseltal and St. Charles mud pond

Within the framework of two JPG workshops (July and November 2007) different strategies for the development of Warndt in terms of biomass production were thoroughly discussed. The JPG reports compile the results: the opportunities of these approaches as well as the main areas of conflict. The next step forward is to use these results as starting point for an exemplary implementation and testing phase.



Impressions from the JPG workshops in July and November 2007

4. What is the ‘Headline Issue’ that this project and Joint Planning Group has addressed?

Urban landscapes and their potential for renewable energy production: biomass production in the urban landscape

5. What is the specific Objective/Question that your project and JPG has addressed in relation to SAUL2EXT Objective 1¹?

The Saarland project addresses the link between urban landscape and their potential as a place of work and production alongside specific key issues: training and education, regional development and tourism, urban forestry and renewable energy production. It strongly relates to the SAUL2EXT objective 1. Therefore, most of the results/conclusions relate to this objective.

The JPG focused on the biomass production case study in the Warndt area. Here, the interplay between sustainable subsequent usages for the old mining sites and new usages for urban landscapes related to renewable energy production were investigated.

6. What results/conclusions have arisen in response to this Objective/ Question?

All case studies and action projects promote urban landscapes as an asset to the economic vitality of city regions and – in doing so – as key issue to social cohesion. Therefore, most conclusions relate to objective 2 as well.

- The close connection between sustainable subsequent usages for the old mining sites (based on renewable energy production) and new usages for the urban landscape related to these branches (timber and biomass production) makes use of synergies and spatial potential in a peripheral and economically very weak part of the agglomeration. This integrated initiative could create jobs and give fresh impetus to regional development.
- Nevertheless, there are several areas of conflicts to be discussed with local people and residents before starting the testing phase (aesthetic dimension, leisure demands ...). Working on the basis of a sensitivity analysis of the landscape, and a catalogue of integration measures that has been developed, the biomass production in terms of energy forests (short-rotation coppice) could be designed in a way that will enrich the landscape and also address the need for landscape conservation in Warndt. An integrated energy forest concept could also raise Warndt’s profile as a tourist destination, and position Warndt nationally as a model biomass location.
- The systematic approach towards exploring the socio-economic potential of urban landscapes shows how to make use of even unspectacular areas like Warndt for tourism and regional development. Small scale projects help to get an eye for the hidden potential of the urban landscape. The concept of barrier-free urban landscapes and leisure areas improves the accessibility for specific target groups like disabled people and families with young children. The concept may provide the Warndt area with a new image (USP) and

¹ **Objective 1:** illustrate the significance of new urban landscapes to the economic vitality of city regions, engaging businesses in partnerships with public authorities, employees and citizens to recognise the potential impact of current and planned projects

thus with new opportunities for local businesses. The GPS-based technology of orientation and spatial information for hiking and biking tourism supplements the traditional information in terms of maps and guidebooks. This technology is supposed to deliver tailor-made information for individual access to and appropriation of urban landscapes.

7. What is the specific Objective/Question that your project and JPG has addressed in relation to SAUL2EXT Objective 2²?

The Saarland project aimed at involving local people, especially young people, in order to unlock their resources for regional development and focus their interest on the urban landscape issue.

8. What results/conclusions have arisen in response to this Objective/ Question?

- Youth programmes and projects as well as practical trainings for students related to the urban landscapes and regional development encourage the engagement and commitment of young people. Engaging students is an important step in the spatial planning process that leads to innovation and long term sustainability of the project. Especially in Saarland (and all other regions in decline), where young people tend to leave the region after graduating from school, these programmes are essential. Social inclusion of the young people as member of a responsible society can be achieved by giving them a platform to discuss and develop their own perspectives.
- Specific advanced training offers, such as the guest guide training programme for urban parks, enable people to aspire to new or improved careers. They can build capacity through presenting urban landscape issues and heritage sites to visitors. These approaches can help local people find work or at least extend their fields of knowledge to the tourism or culture-related industry. Furthermore, it supports professionals in complementing their knowledge especially with regard to the business and conference sector of the tourism industry.

9. What will happen to the project now that SAUL2EXT funding has ended (what is the exit strategy, how will the project be maintained)?

The SAUL2EXT project is embedded into the framework of the Regional Park Saar and thus into large-scale innovation and restructuring processes comprising the whole agglomeration. The Regional Park has been introduced as a new spatial planning instrument on the basis of the sector plan Environment which is formally adopted on state level.

On the basis of partnership agreements, the partnerships coordinating the activities within the Saarkohlenwald and the Warndt area have officially committed themselves to the Regional Park objectives and projects. Thus, the SAUL and SAUL2EXT initiatives will be continued either jointly under the umbrella of the Regional Park Saar or within the responsibility of the different regional partners (further information see above).

² **Objective 2:** demonstrate the potential value of new urban landscape projects in building social cohesion in city regions, promoting well-being by empowering citizens of all age groups to take responsibility for their future environment