

## Environment vs. Economy Scenario

The area north-west of Cologne in North-Rhine-Westfalia can be described as **an old cultural landscape** with settlements of mostly smaller villages with farming being one of its main industries.

The same area offers the **biggest deposit of lignite coal** in Germany which has been removed and used as a major resource of energy since the 1950s. In order to do so, large parts of land had to be turned into open-cast mines and consequently settlements like towns and villages had to be removed and the citizens had to be resettled to newly established towns.

And the **re-structurisation** is planned to go on in the next 45 years: after almost two decades of planning and political discussions, the work on Garzweiler II, a giant open-cast mine for lignite coal will be started. A total amount of 18.5 square miles of land will be opened to produce approximately 1.3 billion tons of lignite coal. 7,600 people living in 11 villages will have to be resettled, thus leaving their houses and homes behind. Affected by this giant project will also be the Schwalm-Nette wetlands, located in the North of the area of Garzweiler II.

The project not only caused **controversies** among the citizens of North-Rhine-Westfalia, but also almost split its Landtag (state government) apart. Some members of the Landtag argued that Garzweiler II is a **huge economic project**, not only providing work for thousands of people but also providing a source of energy and serving as a tax income machine to the state. This comes at a time when the whole country is suffering from a stagnant economy. Additionally the used land will be turned into natural "green" zones again, with newly grown woods and lakes that will be used as recreation areas.

Other members of the Landtag on the other hand argued that people will have to give up their houses, homes and villages, cultural landscape will be turned into an industrial wasteland. Rivers, lakes and wetlands will be dried out in order to prepare the soil for open-cast mining. In addition critics say that lignite coal does not produce as much energy as other natural resources: more than 60 percent of the energy goes unused and is deposited in the atmosphere. Each ton of lignite burned produces one ton of carbon dioxide. Turning lignite coal into energy can therefore be seen

as a **serious environmental hazard**.