

about the knowledge level of and familiarity with the *Haus der Geschichte* among the broad German public.

In light of the wide use of evaluations in the *Haus der Geschichte* it can be said that almost no other museum has taken visitor orientation and evaluation in the pre-opening planning stages as seriously as the *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. We feel that, especially in times of declining public funding, the methods of visitor orientation combined with the evaluations will grow in importance and in use. The more visitor-oriented museums operate and the more they target a broad range of "everyday" visitors, the more willing political decision-makers and the public will be to invest the level of funding necessary for museum and exhibition projects.

Broad public approval and support for the *Haus der Geschichte* is demonstrated not only by its high attendance figures, but also for the unanimous award of the Museum Prize 1995 conferred by the European Council. Also, the *London Times* has suggested that the underlying concept of the *Haus der Geschichte* – under its literal title "House of History" – should be a model for other European countries, and is already in the planning in Great Britain.

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## The Cultural Audience Network for an Urban Area

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Culture is increasingly becoming a significant location factor and an important condition for urban quality of life. I am particularly referring to the range of possibilities for inhabitants of a region to participate in cultural practices and take advantage of a wide cultural offering. Culture is also significant in the establishment of a "regional consciousness" among the inhabitants of a densely populated area and is part of the regional image used to draw investors.

The region of the Rhine-Neckar triangle, about 100 km south of Frankfurt am Main, is the sixth most densely populated area of the former West Germany. It contains the cities of Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, and Heidelberg and is home to 2 million people. Historically, the area has been repeatedly cut up by the establishment of legal borders; and even today, its territory is divided among three different German federal states governed by different legal statutes. Geographically, it is divided by the Rhine, which flows through it from south to north. Nevertheless, it represents a historically unified region and in the last ten years has begun to cultivate a stronger regional identity.

In 1993, the Department of Sociology of the University

of Karlsruhe received the assignment of studying the variety of regional cultural attractions over a period of two years. The objective of the investigation was to determine the current amount of participation and thereby find ways of improving the cultural infrastructure.

The comparative analysis of visitor structures is unique because of its regional character and the wide assortment of (mostly municipally owned) locations investigated: museums, theaters, parks, and historical sights. The results furnish insights relevant to the cultural image of the area and to marketing aspects for both regional cultural politics and the specific institutions involved, by showing how the visiting public differs from attraction to attraction. For this reason, they offer a basis for future planning.

In a *target place survey*, consisting of a detailed, standardized questionnaire, 17,000 people interested in culture provided information on their cultural activities and needs, their evaluation of the available cultural offerings with which they were acquainted, their preferred informational sociodemographic data, including their town of residence.

Special attention was given to the regional and cultural network (*Kulturelle regionale Vernetzung* = KURVE). The *regional* network refers to the cultural mobility of the inhabitants within but also beyond the region: What distance are they willing to travel to witness a special cultural event? How great is the attraction radius of the cultural institutions? What characteristics single out institutions that are visited often—or seldom?

The term *cultural network* applies to favorite cultural activities and areas where interests tend to accumulate: What is the most popular and frequent cultural activity among visitors? Are there visitor types who are interested in a variety of different cultural activities? How strong is the cultural network? It is possible to discover a hidden visitor potential for institutions that are less well known? What are the differences between devotees of high culture (art museums, theater, opera, etc.) and those of "popular" culture (movies, musicals, etc.)?

The answers to the questions on the regional network show that the individuals surveyed are closely bound to the region. However, this also means that they are prepared to travel distances of over 50 km to take part in culture only in the case of special events. Thus, in terms of mobility for culture's sake the regional network is not (yet) very robust. The Rhine still divides the region in two, yet the survey results on the cultural network show that there are interest overlaps between the two halves. So the potential for strengthening the cultural network does exist. This would entail that more attention be paid to marketing, especially by attempting to reach desired target groups via other informational media.