



Einladung Invitation

Dear Members, Friends and Supporters of the AmerikaHaus NRW,

We cordially invite you to a discussion on:

**Home Is in the Heartland:
A Transatlantic Dialogue on Uniting Industrial Regions**

with **State Senator Kent Smith**,
Ohio Senate

Anne Mervenne,
President, Mervenne & Company

Prof. Dr. Barbara Buchenau,
Professor of North American Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen

Anna Mengede,
Research Assistant and Coordinator of English and International Mobility, Talentkolleg Ruhr

moderated by
Axel Ruppert,
Project Manager, Das Progressive Zentrum e.V.

Tuesday, June 17, 2025 | 06:00 p.m.
Volkshochschule Duisburg | Steinsche Gasse 26 | 47051 Duisburg

As part of the *Study Tour for Midwest Policy Makers to Industrial Core Regions of Germany*, we are pleased to welcome two US delegates to Duisburg for their only public event in North Rhine-Westphalia. This conversation brings together voices from both sides of the Atlantic to explore the shared challenges facing post-industrial regions. Heartlands in both the US and Germany are not only navigating economic change, but political polarization, deep questions about identity and belonging, and uncertainty about the future. Despite different national contexts, communities in these regions are grappling with similar pressures and may have more in common than expected. How have recent political shifts, including the return of Donald Trump to the White House, impacted post-industrial areas? How can structurally disadvantaged regions provide real opportunities for young people to stay, thrive, and participate in democratic life where they are? And how can we

expand regional cooperation and strengthen transatlantic ties to work together on the issues that unite us?

We are looking forward to discussing these and further questions with:



State Senator Kent Smith

is a member of the Ohio Senate, representing the state's 21st district since 2023. He previously served in the Ohio House of Representatives (2015–2022), following over a decade of service on the Euclid Board of Education (2002–2013), where he earned the Ohio School Boards Association's "Award of Achievement" four times. He holds a B.A. from Miami University and a Master's in Urban Studies from Cleveland State University, where his thesis focused on predatory lending. He later co-authored Policy Matters Ohio's first Predatory Lending Report and pursued PhD studies in Economic Development at Cleveland State University.

Photo: Kent Smith



Anne Mervenne

is President of Mervenne & Co., a public affairs consulting firm. She served for 20 years as the Republican Co-Director of the bi-partisan Michigan Political Leadership Program at Michigan State University. She is on the Board of Directors of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Michigan and the national board of directors for the Private Directors Association. Ms. Mervenne has been appointed by the last four governors to serve on state boards, including her appointment by Governor Whitmer to the State Board of Ethics.

Photo: Private



Prof. Dr. Barbara Buchenau

is Professor of North American Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany. Her most recent publications include *Narrative in Urban Planning: A Practical Field Guide* (co-authored with Lieven Ameel and Jens Martin Gurr, 2023) and *City Scripts: Narratives of Postindustrial Urban Futures* (OSUP, 2023). She served as UDE's Vice-Rector of Social Responsibility, Diversity and International Affairs (2018 – 2022), and has directed the inter-university graduate research group *Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions* funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (2018 –2023). She is a member of the Aurora European University Alliance.

Photo: Frank Preuss



Anna Mengede

is a research assistant and coordinator of English and international mobility at the TalentKolleg Ruhr in Gelsenkirchen. The TalentKolleg Ruhr is part of the Talent Development Program, the biggest counseling program aimed at promoting educational equity that has been evaluated in Germany. She has previously worked as a research assistant at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities in Essen, focusing on participatory governance and democratic innovations. Anna Mengede holds a M.Sc. in Inequalities and Social Science from the University of Leeds, England, and a B.A. in English Studies and Sociology from the University of Münster.

Photo: TalentKollegRuhr

Register here!

Tickets are limited and will be allocated on a **first come, first served basis**. We kindly ask you to only reserve the number of tickets that you will definitely use.

In cooperation with:



Supported by:

The State Government of
North Rhine-Westphalia



Best regards,

Viktoria Harbecke and
the AmerikaHaus NRW e.V. Team



Further information on our events can be found on our website:

Events

AmerikaHaus NRW e.V. is a non-profit organization whose activities are supported by donations. If you would like to contribute to our work, we would be delighted to receive a donation from you!

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ApostelInstr. 14-18, 50667 Cologne

Please note that photos and videos will be taken during the event and selected images will be published on the internet and/or in the press. The images and recordings are used for public relations (including social media) and marketing purposes and also serve as permanent documentation of the event. This processing serves to safeguard our legitimate interest in public relations and documentation as of Art. 6 (1) lit. f of the GDPR.

Diese E-Mail wurde an dormels@amerikahaus-nrw.de gesendet.

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