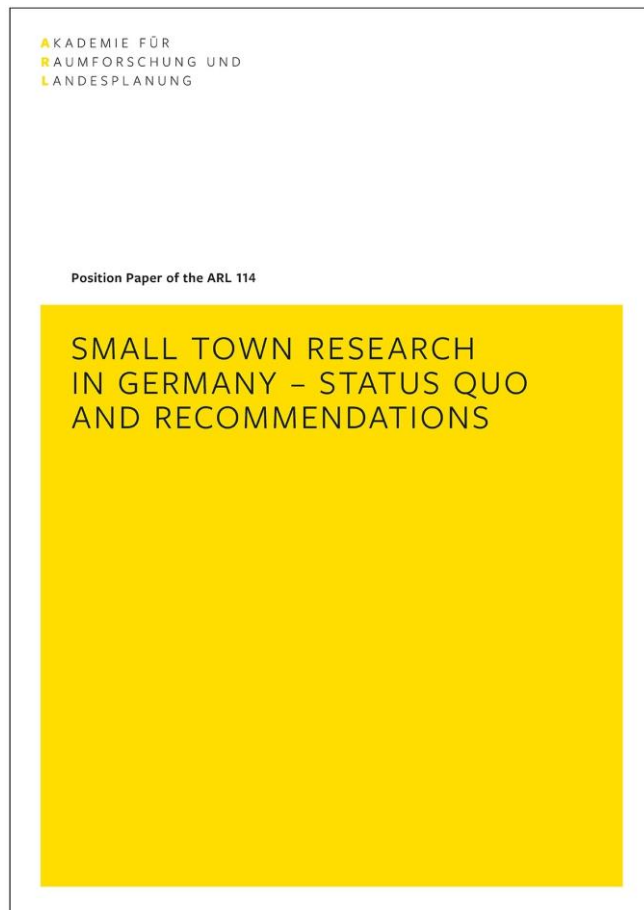


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Press release

New perspectives on small towns beyond common stereotypes



The "Position Paper Small town research in Germany" of the Ad-hoc Working Group of the Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL) summarizes the current state of empirical research on small towns in Germany and focuses on the upcoming tasks of contemporary small town research.

Urban research in Germany is traditionally oriented towards large cities. Metropolitan issues and problems also receive priority attention in the media. Thus the situation of smaller towns and the structures, interdependencies and trends that characterize them are overshadowed by the much-discussed growth of large cities and the new significance of urbanity in the context of reurbanization. There has been little empirical research on other types of cities, especially on small towns with between 5,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. Almost one third of the population in Germany lives in more than 2,000 small towns. At the same time, existing research on small towns is not sufficiently perceived. Thus, numerous stereotypical ideas and narratives can be found in public and partly also in scientific discourses, which thematise small towns either as places of idyllic rural life or devaluing them as petty bourgeois and backward-looking alternatives to seemingly cosmopolitan cities. In scientific

studies, small towns are often considered as research objects in a mixed category with medium-sized towns, or subsumed as subcategories under rural areas, although 56% of the small towns in Germany are located in metropolitan regions. This alone suggests that both the initial situations and problems of small towns and their opportunities differ depending on their location, economic conditions, settlement structure and built fabric.

According to the working group, small towns form an independent type of settlement. The authors of the position paper therefore recommend expanding evidence-based research and taking greater account of small towns. Thereby it is important to

- establish a systematic and interdisciplinary small town research,
- critically question traditional small town stereotypes,
- develop differentiated views on and new typologies of small towns,
- strengthen small towns as a topic in academic teaching,
- provide small-scale statistical data,
- support small town research through research policy.

The position paper calls for theoretically and empirically well-founded research on small towns and at the same time contains recommendations for research, teaching and official statistics.

Reference

Academy for Spatial Research and Planning (ARL) (Ed.) (2019): Small town research in Germany – status quo and recommendations. Hanover. = Position Paper of the ARL 114.

https://shop.arl-net.de/media/direct/pdf/pospapier/pospapier_114.pdf

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