

Workshop

Minorities and 'culture' between the urban and the rural - small towns as a site of current cultural (heritage) policy negotiations

10.-11.10.2024

Leibniz University of Hanover

Schneiderberg 50, 30167 Hanover (Room V005)

A cooperation between: Sorbisches Institut / Serbski institut &
Center for Inclusive Citizenship (CINC), Leibniz University of Hanover

Aim

Like cultural practices in general, the culture of minoritised groups - understood here both as the result of representative acts and as a knowledge resource (Hall 2013; Laschewski 2023), which enables the understanding and implementation of specific practices and can be used to produce a sense of belonging - is increasingly negotiated in a field of tension between urbanity and rurality, city and countryside. Customs and traditions, for example those of ethnic minorities, often have a strong connection to the landscape and are part of village coexistence. At the same time, in the context of increasingly mobile lifestyles, the spheres of activity of such 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991) are rarely limited to a decidedly rural area; rather, actors from these communities operate in an in-between whose planning, geographical and, above all, cultural-political specifics are increasingly moving to the centre of academic interest. Rurality and urbanity are therefore not clearly separated spatial poles, but must be understood as a continuum of diverse lifestyles and spatial conditions.

As a 'field of action and place of negotiation of (civically) limited diversity' (Nell 2022), small towns are a particularly insightful space of this in-between. Despite sometimes conflicting cultural images, they have long been modern and characterised by the very processes of mobility, multilocality and economic globalisation that also shape the living environment of their (partly minoritised) inhabitants. This also has consequences for cultural policy concepts and their practical implementation. Cultural policy concepts and instruments, which are often characterised by global discourses such as UNESCO conventions and metropolitan-oriented concepts (e.g. creative cities), are now also encountering these spaces of 'limited diversity' in efforts to develop systematic cultural policies in peripheral areas.

In research, a view of small towns as an independent type of urban settlement is increasingly being established (Kompendium, Kleinstadtakademie). This means that they are no longer conceptualised solely as belonging to rural areas or as small versions of large cities but are viewed in their heterogeneity and characteristic socio-economic and cultural dynamics (Steinführer).

Against the backdrop of current cultural (heritage) policy developments, the two-day workshop deals with both migrant and nationally recognised ethnic minorities and the spatial aspects of their cultural production from the perspective of spatial and cultural theory and reflection. The focus here is on small towns as spaces of enquiry rich in knowledge in the field of tension between the urban and the rural. The event asks, among other things:

- What happens when global cultural-political concepts and policies clash with local (multicultural) events on the ground? Which moments are decisive for the cultural arenas and cultural-political initiatives on the ground?
- Which cross-spatial discourses on city, country, nation, minority, participation and community have an impact on the practice of local actors? And to what extent are these spatially bound?
- How does 'cultural diversity' take place in small towns? Who are the actors in this arena of action?
- What is the relationship between the social cohesion sought in many cultural policy interventions and (cultural) economic growth?
- What is the legacy and impact of the idea of the small town as an 'imagined community'?

Panel

Panel 1: From national to regional/ethnicised cultural heritage - challenging hegemonic cultural heritage discourses and practices

The inclusion of intangible cultural elements in the UNESCO conventions is the culmination of a paradigm shift in cultural policy that has been taking place since the 1980s. Everyday cultural practices and rituals are increasingly recognised as aspects of cultural creation worthy of preservation and promotion, and at the same time used to promote cultural tourism and the cultural economy (Yudice 2004). This change goes hand in hand with an increased focus on minority rights, regionality and 'cultural diversity'. Continuing the basic romantic idea of a national cultural heritage, the practices of different ethnic and cultural groups can be integrated into the self-image of a nation and its 'heritage' in this way (Harrison 2013, Bös in preparation). A prerequisite for successful cultural policy is the active participation of these diverse communities of practice active in popular culture (Schneider 2014), which often consist of cultural-political laypeople - such as volunteers and leisure clubs - outside of urban areas. Corresponding cultural policy programmes offer them opportunities for civic engagement just as much as they set limits. Central questions within the panel include

- How powerful are cultural heritage policies and their underlying discourses around ethnicity, nationality and 'cultural diversity' in rural and small-town areas in Germany? What implications do they have for practice?
- What is the relationship between national and minoritised heritage constructions in small towns and rural areas?
- Which minoritised communities (of practice) are at work in these spaces? To what extent do cultural policy structures and programmes contribute to the constitution or imagining of these communities?

Panel 2: Cultural diversity and minorities in small towns - between urbanity and rurality

Immigration to small towns is a normality, partly driven by national migration management. Many residents have personal or family experience of migration, for example as labour migrants from southern and eastern Europe or as refugees from the Soviet Union or Syria. In the cultural arenas of some small towns, these stories of mobility are (mis)represented. In others, they remain invisible. Migrant self-organisation is rarer in the field of popular culture than in large cities. In addition, small towns are central locations for cultural (promotional) institutions for officially recognised ethnic minority regions in Germany.

A look at small towns away from socially still powerful and contested images of whiteness, traditions, homogeneity and backwardness shows that they are not only integrated into global neoliberal developments (Glick-Schiller/Ca-

glar), but are also places where cultural diversity and multi-local ways of life are negotiated. However, these processes look quite different in small towns as 'small urbanities' (Bell/Jayne) than in large cities, which receive far more attention in research and conceptualisation of urban cultural policies.

In contrast to this, researchers in the field of small town research aim to take small towns - as places between urbanity and rurality - as the starting point for theoretical thinking and the development of cultural policy concepts. They are characterised by an attractive but also limited mixture of differentiation and stability, diversity and limitation (Nell). Concepts such as 'rural cosmopolitanism' (Mc Areavey 2018), 'rural multi-culturalism' (Krifors, Alam 2022), or 'trans-local ruralism' (Hedberg 2012) attempt to capture small towns as a site of negotiation of cultural diversity. The panel focusses on the questions:

- What characterises specific constellations of cultural diversity in small towns?
- (How) do these find visible expression in cultural productions and what are the social networks behind them?
- What role do multilocality, economic globalisation and experiences of mobility play in the construction of small towns as 'imagined communities', especially on the part of the residents?
- What can we learn from small towns as a place of negotiation of 'limited diversity' for the theoretical and reflexive further development of cultural policies?

Organised by:

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Programme

Tag 1

Bis 16:30	Arrival of participants	
17:00-18:30	Meet & Greet	
	Welcoming Keynotes	Stephan Beetz (Hochschule Mittweida)
	Discussion	Ruth Mc Areavey (Newcastle University)
19:00	Dinner	

Tag 2

08:30-09:00	Introduction	Deborah Sielert (Leibniz Universität Hannover) Malte Kleinschmidt (Leibniz Universität Hannover) Jenny Hagemann (Sorbisches Institut/Serbski institut)
09:00-11:00	Panel 1: Discourses	Doreen Götzky (Kreismuseum Peine)
	Inputs	Lutz Laschewski (Sorbisches Institut/Serbski institut)
	Discussion	Aysegül Dinccag Kahveci (TU Berlin) Rebecca Koller & Leonie Schäfer (Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-13:30	Panel 2: small towns / spaces	Josepha Milazzo (University of Corsica)
	Inputs	Julia Gabler (Hochschule Zittau-Görlitz)
	Discussion	Deborah Sielert (Leibniz Universität Hannover) Tatevik Mamajanyan (Hochschule Fulda) Katrin Großmann & Johannes Glöckner (Fachhochschule Erfurt)
13:30-14:30	Lunch and energizer	
14:30-15:00	Wrap-Up commentary	Deborah Sielert (Leibniz Universität Hannover) Malte Kleinschmidt (Leibniz Universität Hannover) Jenny Hagemann (Sorbisches Institut/Serbski institut)
15:00-16:30	Fishbowl discussion	
16:30-17:00	End and outlook	