

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SEMINAR

Small Towns and Metropolitan Cores: Functional Relations, Spatial Imaginaries and Cooperation Arrangements

The ARL – Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association is an independent institution under public law situated in Hanover, Germany. As a competence centre for sustainable territorial development, the research focus of the ARL is on national and international developments of spatial structures, their causes and effects, and policy and planning options for their management. The ARL organizes inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation in numerous working groups where scientific and practice knowledge is pooled and new knowledge is generated and passed on.

In 2020, the ARL set up an international working group on the following theme: [Small towns and metropolitan cores: towards cooperation? A European perspective](#). This working group is composed of a dozen European academics and experts who address the topic and its sub-aspects both from inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives. The members of the working group work together for three years. They collaborate online and meet physically for two workshops a year at various locations across Europe. **The group may also be complemented by invited experts relevant to the topics of research.**

On the occasion of the next meeting in Hannover in September 2022, the working group launches a call for contributions to an online seminar. The invitation is open to any academic who is interested to debate about the relationships between metropolitan regions and small towns in the European context, now and in the future.

This seminar is an outstanding opportunity for contributors to share their results, to exchange ideas with the members of the working group and to gain more visibility at the international level.

The online format will allow with in-depth discussions with members of the working group and all the participants, without having to travel to Hannover to participate face-to-face to the seminar.

Shortly after the seminar, **the contribution of invited contributors will be considered for inclusion in the publication plan of the working group.** We expect to publish an English-language, peer-reviewed scientific publication. **Contacts are currently taking place with publishers or journal editors for a book or a special issue of a peer- reviewed journal.**

Theme and tracks

While large cities and metropolitan city-regions are seen as major places of a society based on knowledge, innovation and creativity, a large proportion of the population in many European countries lives in small urban settlements. For many reasons, the challenges faced by small towns remain underexplored. Small towns are heterogeneous regarding their spatial position: they may be included in metro regions, isolated in remote rural areas or part of a network of towns of a similar size. The population thresholds and the key functions of 'small towns' are not unanimous criteria within the research community. Across Europe, few studies have been devoted to small towns being part of a larger metropolitan area and even less analysis has been carried out on how territorial cooperation can bring reciprocal benefits or challenges between metropolitan core and intermediate urban poles.

The working group focuses on how European small towns face metropolitan development and its associated challenges. Aiming at developing a transnational and interdisciplinary approach to the chosen topic, the working group explores several research questions. In view of the online seminar, three lines of

investigations are proposed.

Track 1 -Functional relations and socio-spatial dynamics

The track 'Functional relations and socio-spatial dynamics' explores interdependencies between small towns and their larger neighbouring city or cities. What happens in small towns is often dependent on developments in those larger cities, and vice versa. Such interdependencies come to the fore in different types of functional relationships (e.g. commuting, leisure trips, household and firm migration, etc.) and changing functions and socio-demographic compositions of both the smaller and the larger city. More generally, such relationships have been characterized as 'shadowing' and 'borrowing'. For this seminar, we seek contributions that explore these functional interdependencies between small and larger cities nearby. Contributions could focus for instance on:

- Functional typologies of small towns
- Development trajectories of small towns in relation to their larger neighbour
- Labour market or housing market integration between cities
- Patterns of specialization and concentration of urban functions
- Measuring relationships and dependencies between towns and larger cities
- Processes of gentrification in towns close to larger cities
- Shadowing and borrowing, or other typologies of dependencies between cities
- Comparisons in development between small towns close to larger cities and towns that are more isolated

Track 2 - Narratives and Imaginaries

The track 'Narratives and Imaginaries' explores small towns' roles and perceptions within metropolitan urban systems. There are multiple relations between small towns and their neighbouring municipalities. These complex linkages are often reported through commonly shared narratives and spatial imaginaries. The most efficacious narratives and imaginaries are likely to influence public discourse and thus urban development. We particularly seek contributions that enrich the academic discussion on:

- Theoretical discourses on narratives and (spatial) imaginaries regarding small towns
- Comparative studies on external-internal narratives of small towns located in metropolitan cores and their role in small towns' position in metropolitan urban systems
- Importance of narratives and imaginaries for local development practices in small town
- Typologies of small towns based on existing narratives
- Interrelations between narratives or imaginaries and landscape, urban design or quality of life.

Track 3 - Institutions and Policies

The track 'Institutions and Policies' explores two main governance questions: (i) whether metropolitan governance arrangements align with the functional city-region, and (ii) what are the advantages for a small town authority to be included in or to cooperate with a metro government or to stand alone. The answers are not straightforward since the management of metropolitan areas has been intensely debated for decades. Some scholars have argued for one integrated government for the whole city-region while others consider that the competition among municipalities ensures greater efficiency and democracy. This debate is very much influenced by the US case and there is a need for analysis in the case of European countries. For this seminar, we welcome contributions that analyze cooperation schemes or cases of discontent between small town authorities and larger city authorities or metropolitan governments nearby in the European setting. Contributions may focus on:

- The political and social implications for small towns of taking part in a metropolitan institution with competences and financial resources
- To what extent a model of governance based on informal agreements leaves more autonomy to small town authorities
- The uneven capacity to act of metropolitan authorities in public transportation, sustainability or housing, affecting the quality of life in small towns and their access to big cities

- The attitudes of local actors towards cooperation, the capacity to "think metropolitan" and how this may shape the outputs
- The diversity of policy arrangements for city-region cooperation in European countries, and the diversity of instruments (strategic planning, financial incentives for cooperation, amalgamation of local governments...).

Application

This call is intended to academics from European countries, who have solid expertise on planning, development or policy issues of metropolises and small towns and who are interested to debate about the aforementioned challenges affecting metropolises and towns. The group's work programme requires an inter- and transdisciplinary approach, inviting the involvement of members of research institutions in urban and regional planning, geography, sociology, environmental studies, political sciences, regional economy, and other relevant disciplines.

If you are interested in participating in the online seminar, please submit your statement of interest (in digital form) by

June 24, 2022

Your application should include two elements:

- 1) a title and an abstract for your presentation specifying your research perspective and potential contribution to the debates of the working group (max. 500 words);
- 2) a brief explanation of your interest in participating with reference to your experience (max. 100 words), including a bibliography of your most relevant publications or research projects (max. 5 references).

Please send your application in digital form to

christophe.demaziere@univ-tours.fr

and

Filip.Snieg@arl-net.de.

Schedule

24 June 2022: Deadline for abstract submission

4 July 2022: Notification of acceptance to invited speakers

21 September 2022: Online seminar

30 November 2022: Invitation to write a paper as part of the publication plan of the working group.

For your reference, the ARL working group has a [webpage](#). Its members, who will act as scientific committee of the seminar, are:

Dr. Hans Thor Andersen (Aalborg Univ./Denmark)

Prof. Jerzy Bański (Polish Academy of Sciences/Poland)

Bau Ass. Yane Marie Conradi (TU Darmstadt/Germany)

Prof. Giancarlo Cotella (Politecnico Torino/Italy)

Prof. Christophe Demazière (Univ. de Tours/France, chair of the working group)

Dr. Sebastian Dembski (Liverpool Univ./UK)

Dr. Maria Gunko (Russian Academy of Sciences/Russia)

Dr. Divya Leducq (Univ. de Tours/France)

Prof. Evert Meijers (Utrecht Univ./Netherlands)

Prof. Sofia Morgado (Univ. Lisboa/Portugal)

Prof. Loris Servillo (Politecnico Torino/Italy)

The working group is managed at ARL by M.Sc. Filip Śnieg.