



Call for manuscripts



The Attractiveness of Small and Medium Towns: Criteria, Issues and Strategies

Abstract:

The CERAMAC (Centre for Geographical Studies on Massif Central, Highlands and Fragile Spaces, Clermont-Ferrand University, France) in collaboration with the Pedagogical University (Krakow, Poland) invites contributions for a special issue of its scientific papers series dealing with the issue of attractiveness of small and medium towns, by scholars and stakeholders from various backgrounds (geographers, historians, economists, sociologists, spatial planners, etc.).

Key-words:

Small and medium sized towns, attractiveness, development strategies

Argument:

The **CERAMAC** (Centre for Geographical Studies on Massif Central, Highlands and Fragile Spaces, Clermont-Ferrand University, France) in collaboration with the **Pedagogical University** (Krakow, Poland) invites contributions for a special issue of its scientific papers series dealing with the **issue of attractiveness of small and medium towns**, by scholars and stakeholders from various backgrounds (geographers, historians, economists, sociologists, spatial planners, etc.).

In the abundant literature on metropolisation and effects of globalization, focus is driven to large cities and metropolises which tend, theoretically, to concentrate attractiveness of people and economic actors. But studies show that small and medium-sized cities are not totally disqualified by these processes but tend to attract or to keep inhabitants and activities, to create jobs (though in a difficult context of post-industrial economy) and to remain competitive, in different ways depending on very contrasted trends and situations. Researches conducted in European and international contexts stress the interest of such levels of territories, in a time of promotion of polycentric urban networks. What is their place in changing urban networks? Furthermore, the analysis can focus on functional relationships between secondary towns and rural areas. Those surrounding areas are also changing, sometimes more depopulated, sometimes more dynamics than urban centres: what are the position of small and medium towns, as „centres”, „poles”, „outposts”? What remain on inherited relationships in times of mobility, in sometimes fragile contexts (due to the demographical and economic aspects)?

This book will be multidisciplinary with comparative approaches in time (long term diachronic works) and in space (international scale). Until now, local case-studies are quite numerous but don't allow general observations and conclusions on the functioning of secondary towns, and it is difficult to draw models. This book should favour exchanges and cross-analysis between methodological and epistemological works.

Analysis conducted by spatial planners, economists, geographers or historians will propose a global approach of changes in small and medium towns and understand what kind of

relationships they have with their surrounding territories, being rural or urban. Both theoretical and empirical papers on examples and case studies from around the world are welcomed.

As the „**small and medium towns**” category can have a different meaning in different parts of the world, in this case they are considered without a strict population number limit (but they should be defined as such in their national context) and can be either integrated in metropolitan systems or towns in more isolated and peripheral location.

Among the many possible ways of addressing these issues, we plan to highlight four topics:

1. Definition of attractiveness: multidisciplinary, comparative and diachronic approaches

An important aim of the book is to clarify the object of attractiveness. How can it be defined and measured? Are criteria and methods of an economist and an historian comparable? Have secondary towns always been attractive and according to what paces and contexts? What are the indicators of attractiveness? What are the differences between small and medium towns and what is in common between a 2 000, a 25 000 or a 100 000 inhabitants town? Beyond size issues, factors of attractiveness in small and medium towns must be analysed.

The multidisciplinary contributions should allow sharing concepts and epistemological approaches to specify criteria of analysis of small and medium towns.

2. Issues of quality of life and residential attractiveness

In a context of strong political and social demand on quality of life, linked with growing aspects of sustainable development and increasing residential economy, secondary towns are part of the competition between territories by promoting advantages such as good image, „natural” environment, accessible prices, local solidarities or historical heritage. The issue of mobility is important due to growing distances and spatial dissociations between places of work and places of living.

The issue of quality of life deals with different aspects such as urban environment, social amenities, well-being, local services and trades, from „objective” points of view (ratio and statistical elements) but also more subjective aspects such as social demand, specifically from newcomers, for rural character and urban equipments. Discourses and marketing promote „Human sized cities”, „Places of well-being”, „Small is beautiful”, as mottos for small and medium towns. But what is the reality beyond those words?

The comparative approach is interesting to study towns in different contexts. Stakes such as decentralisation policies, privatisation, reform of public services (and new roles dedicated to these levels of the urban hierarchy) deserve to be analysed: to what extent are these elements of context influencing the attractiveness of secondary towns?

3. Functional changes : innovation and competitiveness

Another aspect is dealing with the economic aspects of local development. Economists are largely insisting on the economies of scale, giving advantages to big territories. Sociologists stress the advantages of small territories for social interactions and more individual relationships. Several hypotheses can be formulated for secondary towns:

- They combine both advantages, benefiting from a big enough size without destroying social links necessary to their development,
- On the contrary, they are penalised by a size inferior to the optimal one and can't benefit from the effects of social networks.

4. Public policies : to support and promote the attractiveness of territories

Nowadays, public policies are largely promoting support to large cities, through specific policies for competitive poles, research and development fields and innovation activities. But studies of economists, geographers or sociologists show that small and medium towns are part of economic and social innovation processes and deserve to be supported by public stakeholders. In some cases, specific policies are dedicated to small and medium towns but not always (and not often).

This section will deal with identity and political aspects of attractiveness. How is it appropriated by local stakeholders? What frames of reference and incentive levers are used and implemented? For example, what project of territory is implied by certification actions such as UNESCO label for heritage? Lots of territories are implementing policies to attract inhabitants and entrepreneurs through conventional programs (creation of activities zones) or more original ones (support to project initiators).

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Manuscript submission guidelines

Manuscripts will be subject to anonymous peer review by at least two specialist referees.

Contributions submitted for publication should be prepared in good quality English. Articles must be restricted to some 5000 words and should not exceed 25 standard pages including illustrations, tables and references.

Authors should supply an abstract of not more than 100 words to appear at the beginning of the article.

The title, the author's name, affiliation should be submitted on a separate page.

Tables and illustrations should be titled and numbered. Each should be placed on a separate sheet at the end of the text. All line diagrams are termed 'Figures' and should be referred to as such in the typescript. Maps and graphs should be prepared in such a form that they can be reproduced without redrawing. The places where tables and figures should be inserted in the text must be clearly indicated.

Author citations should correspond to the author-date system e.g. (Smith, 1990, pp. 15-18). If several papers by the same author and from the same year are cited, a, b, c, etc. should be put after the year of publication. The list of references should be prepared very carefully in alphabetical order, titles of journals should not be abbreviated and the bibliographic information should comprise:

- for books - name(s) of author(s) or editor(s), year of publication, title, place of publication, publisher;
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