

Ralf Bokermann

***Study on Small Towns in the Lower Oder area and
West-Pomerania***

1. Small towns in peripheral regions

Over the last few years the significance of small towns for the rural area has been a topic for research, conferences and various papers. A far-reaching agreement was worked out that small towns, as a focus network, shape the structure of the rural area. The range of functions established here goes beyond almost all spheres of life and fields of work. Small towns are locations for schools, purchasing, local and regional administration, medical supply, culture and offers of entertainment and not least centres of employment and creation of added value in rural spaces.

The significance of small towns in various rural regions has as yet not been pursued that much. Earlier own surveys give rise to the conclusion, that functions of small towns are the more important to the surrounding area, the more sparsely the current regions are populated and the more distinctive the peripheral situation is. The further the next metropolitan region is and therefore more difficult to reach, the more important the functions of the smaller centres become for the residents.

A peripheral situation applies quite obviously to the area in Germany along the eastern national border along the lower Oder and the Stettiner Haff (Haff = lagoon). A confirmation of the theory of an increased function of the small towns there would be bound to surveys on the spot and their evaluation. However up to now, only short surveys have been possible on general regional conditions and visible urban development aspects. These are summarised as an outline. Due to the roughly sketched basis, judgements and valuations remain largely incomplete.

2. Regional conditions

The area to be outlined extends from the southern administrative district Uckermark (Federal State of Brandenburg) up to the centre of the region West-Pomerania, south of Greifswald, and encompasses more or less the newly created administrative district of Pomerania-Greifswald. The area in this respect geographically forms a unit as it is situated in the young moraine area of the last glacial period (Weichselian glacial period, wear off approx. 12,000 years ago), which is represented only in the northeast of Germany. The landscape is divided into subglacial till and sandar slabs and several, partly broad river plains. The ground moraines and partly the sandar areas as well are mainly used for agriculture. The river valleys are mainly grassland. Well-known river valleys in the southern area are Welse, Randow and Uecker, in the northern area Zarow, Peene and Ziese. Most river plains are internally segmented via a systematic drainage network.

For the transregional traffic, the region is relatively well accessible. Coming from the direction of Berlin, the Motorway 11 goes to south of Stettin over the border to Poland. The Motorway 20 from the northern Uckermark makes the coastal area of the Baltic Sea accessible and connects up with the North German network of motorways. The most

important train connection is the railway line from Berlin to Stralsund.

Official statements concerning regional development report the outlined area as sparsely populated and peripheral in an all-German comparison, and the regional economic development as below average. The potential for agriculture, the countryside appeal and particularly for tourism are estimated as being high.

3. Outline of selected small towns

3.1 Common features

The 6 most important small towns of the area which have more than 10,000 inhabitants are outlined and are predominantly more important for the surrounding countryside. Before the administrative reforms after 1990, the towns were seat of district government for considerably smaller administrative districts at that time. During the last weeks of the 2nd World War this was a front line area and in this time 50% of the small towns were largely destroyed. The reconstruction was mainly realized by multi-storeyed apartment blocks, built up to the historical areas like market places and churches. The loss of an historical building culture is very noticeable by this. The medieval brick Gothic churches, predominant in some small towns often have the size of cathedrals. These church buildings are evidence for the economically important stand of these small towns and the region in the Middle Ages. The prevailing war-damaged structures show the economic problem for the preservation of the churches.



Fig.1: Castle Klempenow, 25 km west of Anklam.



Fig. 2: Reed belt at the Stettiner Haff east of Ueckermünde.

3.2 Angermünde

The small town is located southeast of the administrative district Uckermark at the Münde Lake. The surrounding countryside is predominantly a light wavy moraine area, mainly sandy, for agriculture medium to less fertile soils. There are 13,700 inhabitants in the town area. With 23 surrounding villages Angermünde has a considerable size. The municipal area is located in the west and south in the biosphere reserve Schorfheide-Chorin, the eastern part in the national park "Lower Oder Valley".



Fig. 3: Preserved town wall with tower in Angermünde



Fig. 4: Market place with city hall in Angermünde.

The town centre with a remarkable building stock and an essential part of the city wall has been preserved. From 1991 the historical old town was gradually re-established and has been rewarded for this. The old part of the town has been classed as an earth heritage since 1994. - The listing of the economic enterprises shows primarily small and medium-sized enterprises of various trade sectors. A larger industrial estate will facilitate larger settlements. The touristic offer is mainly based on the advantages of the landscape which provides best prerequisites for water and cycling sports.

3.3 Prenzlau

Prenzlau is the main town within the historical landscape of Uckermark and is the district capital of this large administrative district. The town is located in the valley of the Ucker and borders on the Oberucker Lake in the south. Mainly to the east and north landscapes are on subglacial till with predominantly good soils and mainly farmland. The municipal area borders on the national park "Uckermärkische Seen" in the southwest. The municipality with 19,000 inhabitants and 8 assigned villages count as one of the larger townships.

In the 2nd World War more than 80% of the town centre was destroyed. The inner urban area is characterised by apartment blocks but also by historical buildings. St. Mary's church, a Dominican monastery as well as half of the city wall with an outstanding gate tower still remain. Since 1991 Prenzlau has taken part almost consistently within the urban development supporting programs, including the town district of Sternberg being restored with historical buildings.

The town has quite good traffic links. Several railroad lines cross in the town, the most important one being the Intercity Express route from Berlin to Stralsund. There are two access roads for the Motorway 20, for the Motorway 11 a connection not too far away. Due to several busy industrial estates, a relatively strong economic base can be seen. Furthermore many tourist offers can be seen from the town area, mainly water sports and fishing. The cycling track from Berlin to Usedom runs through Prenzlau.



Fig. 5: For living purposes redesigned farm buildings on the domain of Ferdinandshof near Pasewalk.



Fig. 6: The main building of former barracks complex in Pasewalk.

3.4 Pasewalk

The town is located on the river Uecker, in the south of the district West-Pomerania-Greifswald. On both sides of the town there are low wavy, occasional knobby slabs of ground moraine with soils which are relatively good and used predominantly in agriculture. In the north-east the Uecker lowland closes and then the lowland of the Ueckermünder heath up to the Stettiner Haff in the northeast. The town has 10,600 inhabitants. Pasewalk was the district capital of the Uecker-Randow district up to 2011. It still functions as administrative centre of 15 connected villages in the surrounding countryside.

The town centre was destroyed in the 2nd World War for the most part. The reconstruction was carried out by building apartment blocks up to the market square. The brick-built Saint Mary's church, considerable parts of the medieval town wall with two gate towers as well as the main building of the large, brick-built Prussian barracks complex have all been preserved. With the help of the urban development support programs the centre and other town areas have been repaired since 1991.

Pasewalk is near Motorway 20 and - as Prenzlau - near the main rail line from Berlin to Stralsund. Furthermore the town is crossed by the railroad line to Hamburg from Stettin via Lübeck. Informations on the local business world shows the electrical and metal trades to food and building-material producers. Despite the distance of approx. 130 km to Berlin, craftsmen should still be able to find work there.

3.5 Ueckermünde

Ueckermünde with 8,940 inhabitants and 4 assigned villages in its hinterland is a medium centre of the state regional planning. The town is located about 2 km away from the estuary of the Uecker into the Stettiner Haff and thus into the Baltic Sea. In the north the river Zarow runs into the lagoon. The flat sandar areas of the Ueckermünder heath are extended over the complete hinterland of about 50 km.



Fig. 7: Swimming area of Ueckermünde at the Stettiner Haff.



Fig. 8: Street line in the seaport Ueckermünde.

The town remained intact in the World War and has an historical town centre. The preserved urban features and many remarkable buildings illustrate which loss other towns in the region have suffered with war-damaged historical buildings. Since 1991 the town centre and apartment blocks have been repaired through urban development support programs. The south wing of the duke's castle dated 1546 has also been restored.

The chemical and wood-processing industries and others are present in this region. The industrial docks can also be called at by larger freighters. The town is characterised by tourism. Ueckermünde is a recognised seaside resort. A large bathing beach as well as a marina does justice to this claim.



Fig. 9: Anklam's market square with view of St. Nicolai church.



Fig. 10: View of the market square to restored gate tower in Anklam.

3.6 Anklam

The former Hanseatic town is situated above the Peene river plain, about 7 km from the river estuary into the Stettiner Haff. A road-bridge runs over the Peene river (western outlet of the lagoon into the Baltic Sea) near the estuary to the island of Usedom. In Anklam's surrounding countryside glacial outwash soils of poorer to medium quality predominate with mainly arable use.

Anklam is a former district capital and has at present 12,900 inhabitants. After 1990 intense migration took place (in 1988 there were 19,700 inhabitants). The historical centre

was heavily destroyed by bomb raids and during the last weeks of the war. After 1991 the town centre was redeveloped with the help of various promotional programmes. The market square with adjacent buildings was reconstructed. The stately St. Mary's church was preserved. There has been additional reconstruction work done on the Nikolai church. Further preserved buildings are a Gothic gabled house, a fortified tower gate with a museum set up there as well as a row of houses which conveys an impression of the old building culture. Parts of the city wall were also secured. Anklam is situated on the European route of red-brick Gothic architecture.

Several federal roads run through the municipal area. The junction to the Motorway 20 is approx. 25 km to the west. Like most small towns of the region Anklam has a railway station on the railroad line from Berlin to Stralsund. The river Peene is navigable up to the inland port of the town. This was an important route in the Middle Ages to the Baltic Sea. Another important connection is the authorised airfield for general air traffic.

Anklam is supported economically on a mixture of small and medium-sized enterprises of different branches. Offers from tourism are considerable. These show that the proximity to the island of Usedom is beneficial.



Fig. 11: Town hall on the market square in Wolgast.



Fig. 12: House row at the port of Wolgast.

3.7 Wolgast

The former Hanseatic town lies directly on the Peene river where the second (northern) bridge leads to the island of Usedom. The surrounding countryside is a glacial area with soils which are mostly not so good but nevertheless used for arable farmland. In the south west there is a long terminal moraine which is frequently wooded. Wolgast has 12,500 inhabitants with 11 assigned villages and is designated as a medium centre of the state.

The centre is well preserved with remarkable urban features. Since 1991 the town centre and wider settlement areas were gradually reconstructed with help from the urban development programs. Emphasis should be put on the Petri church – a three knaved basilica - the historical town hall as well as parts of the town wall. Wolgast is a site on the European route of the red-brick Gothic architecture.

An economic pillar of the town is the Peene shipyard with suppliers. Not to be overseen are the many touristic offers. Apart from ship and boating routes, various cycling trips are on offer. A further attraction is the zoo.



Fig. 13: Town hall of Templin.



Fig. 14: Row of houses leading to the market square of Templin.

3.8 Excursus: Templin

Templin is situated in the western Uckermark and so outside of the deferred region along the Oder. Interesting is the preserved town centre which besides Angermünde allows the studies of the structure of small towns in the north eastern area of Brandenburg. The surrounding countryside is located on a glacial slab with larger closed woodlands. The town borders on the Templin Lake and on the national park "Uckermärkische Seen". The biosphere reserve Schorfheide-Chorin is aligned to the southeast.

Templin has 16,100 inhabitants. The assigned 24 villages are partly the size of hamlets. Together with the town centre the town wall with several gate towers and Wiek houses (small houses within the town wall) is well restored. There is a direct traffic connection to Berlin's surrounding countryside, to Prenzlau and further to the north via the federal road 109. Furthermore there are train connections, and to the east access in approx. 25 km to the Motorway 11.

Templin is medium centre too. Small and medium-sized industries of many divisions are represented here too. The town backs tourism in which the relative proximity to Berlin is referred to. Templin is a thermal saline medicinal spa. The proximity to numerous lakes is also important for tourism.

4. Literature (Choice)

1. Office f. statistics Berlin- Brandenburg, 2013: Population in the Federal State of Brandenburg to district independent communities and communities. Internet data set, Potsdam.
2. Bokermann, R., 2009: Small towns in rural regions. Ecovast document line, 7th ed. Pub. Ecovast, Eckernförde.

3. BBR – Federal Office f. structure affairs and space science, 2005: Space planning report 2005. Reports, vol. 21, Bonn.
4. Eckart, K. (ed.), 2001: Germany. Perthe's country profiles. Pub. house J. Perthes, Gotha.
5. Glaser, R. et al., 2007: Geography of Germany. Science book society, Darmstadt.
6. Künzel, W. / W. Rellecke (ed.), 2008: History of the German states. Aschendorf pub. house, Münster.
7. Liedke, H. and J. Marcinek (ed.), 2002: Physical Geography of Germany. Pub. house J. Perthes, Gotha.
8. Ministry f. infrastructure and agriculture (ed.), 2009: State development plan Berlin-Brandenburg. Potsdam.
9. Regional planning association West- Pomerania, 2010: Regional space development program of West- Pomerania. Internet data set, Greifswald.
10. Statistical state office of Mecklenburg / West- Pomerania, 2013: Development of Population in districts and communities. Internet data set, Schwerin.
11. Weiss, W. (ed.), 1996: Mecklenburg / West- Pomerania. Perthe's country profiles. Pub. house J. Perthes, Gotha.
12. Pub. house G. Westermann, 2005: Germany in maps / Diercke Atlas. Braunschweig.
13. Other scources: Official internet data sets of the on number 3.2 to 3.8 listed small towns.

1. Amt f. Statistik Berlin- Brandenburg, 2013: Bevölkerung im Land Brandenburg nach amtsfreien Gemeinden, Ämtern u. Gemeinden. Internetdatei, Potsdam.
2. Bokermann, R., 2009: Kleinstädte in ländlichen Räumen. Ecovast- Schriftenreihe, Bd.7. Hrsg. Ecovast, Eckernförde.
3. Bundesamt f. Bauwesen u. Raumordnung, 2005: Raumordnungsbericht 2005. Berichte, Bd. 21, Bonn.
4. Eckart, K. (Hrsg.), 2001: Deutschland. Perthes Länderprofile. Verlag J. Perthes, Gotha.
5. Glaser, R. et al., 2007: Geographie Deutschlands. Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt.
6. Künzel, W. / W. Rellecke (Hrsg.), 2008: Geschichte der Deutschen Länder. Aschendorf Verlag, Münster.
7. Liedke, H. u. J. Marcinek (Hrsg.), 2002: Physische Geographie Deutschlands. Verlag J. Perthes, Gotha.
8. Ministerium f. Infrastruktur u. Landwirtschaft (Hrsg.), 2009: Landes-entwicklungsplan Berlin- Brandenburg. Potsdam.
9. Regionaler Planungsverband Vorpommern, 2010: Regionales Raument-wicklungsprogramm Vorpommern. Internetdatei, Greifswald.
10. Statistisches Landesamt Mecklenburg- Vorpommern, 2013: Bevölkerungs-entwicklung der Kreise u. Gemeinden. Internetdatei, Schwerin.
11. Weiß, W. (Hrsg.), 1996: Mecklenburg- Vorpommern. Perthes Länderprofile. Verlag J. Perthes, Gotha.
12. Verlag G. Westermann, 2005: Deutschland in Karten/ Diercke Atlas. Braunschweig.