

An Attempt at the Multi-Criterion Classification of Small Towns

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Abstract : The basic aim of this study is to discuss and assess different classifications and research approaches to small towns that take their social and economic functions into account, as well as relations with surrounding areas. The subject literature typically includes three types of approaches to the classification of small towns: 1) the structural, 2) the location-related, and 3) the mixed. The structural approach allows for the grouping of towns from the point of view of the social, cultural and economic functions they discharge. The location-related approach draws on the idea of there being a continuum between the center and the periphery. A mixed classification making simultaneous use of the different approaches to research brings the most information to bear in regard to categories of the urban locality. Bearing in mind the approaches to classification, it is possible to propose a synthetic method for classifying small towns that takes account of economic structure, location and the relationship between the towns and their surroundings. In the case of economic structure, the small centers may be divided into two basic groups - those featuring a multi-branch structure and those that are specialized economically. A second element of the classification reflects the locations of urban centers. Two basic types can be identified - the small town within the range of impact of a large agglomeration, or else the town outside such areas, which is to say located peripherally. The third component of the classification arises out of small towns' relations with their surroundings. In consequence, it is possible to indicate 8 types of small-town: from local centers enjoying good accessibility and a multi-branch economic structure to peripheral supra-local centers characterised by a specialized economic structure.

Keywords : small towns, classification, functional structure, localization

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