

## **Description for the general public**

### **1. Research project objectives/Research hypothesis**

The central objective of this project is to identify the traits of spatial planning culture in small and medium-sized cities. It will help to comprehend spatial planning activities and processes by analysing the underlying practices, approaches, objectives, values and understandings. Research in Poland will be complemented by studies in Germany; this approach will allow generalising findings beyond a national context by identifying identical traits of spatial planning culture in small and medium-sized cities despite supposedly contrasting planning environments. The findings of this research project will allow to check its main hypothesis referring to the commonly supposed change of spatial planning culture towards integrated, operative and cooperative forms. This hypothesis is that this shift has happened to a significant lesser degree in small and medium-sized cities than may be expected considering the importance attached to such traits in current literature and guidelines for urban development. The project will thus help to put the proportionally to its significance neglected by scholars issue of development conditions of and suitable strategies for small and medium-sized cities into focus, and prove the appropriateness of concepts of spatial planning culture to sustain relevant argumentation in this field.

### **2. Research project methodology**

Apart from the conventional method of a systematic review of relevant literature, as well as the use of comparative methods common to analyses of spatial planning systems on the basis of legal regulations and formal organisational structures, the novel approach of this research consists of a case study-based analysis of spatial planning processes taking place in Polish and German small- and medium-sized cities. The analysis of the chosen case studies will rely on three methodological approaches: (1) To carry out a systematic analysis of planning documents as well as e.g. drafts or preliminary studies; (2) to conduct interviews with planning officials and actors in the cities; and (3) to make systematic on-field observations and surveys. In the final methodological approach, the collected data will be assessed against the defined theory framework outlining the common traits of spatial planning culture in small and medium-sized cities beyond the context of national planning systems.

### **3. Expected impact of the research project on the development of sciences, civilization and society**

The impact of the evidence generated by this research project will give new impetus to the scientific debate on assessing and comparing planning practices, processes and attitudes in local, regional, national, or transnational studies. From a methodological perspective, this project will by its outcome advocate the expansion of future research on spatial planning and development towards spatial planning culture. From a cognitive perspective, apart from the input to the debate on planning for small and medium-sized cities, the verified hypotheses of this research will contribute to scientific reflections on the feasibility of harmonising spatial planning policies for different territorial entities. The project will thus make the case for a more sophisticated approach to define urban planning guidelines on a national or European level.