

The Promotion of Building Culture in Rural Germany

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ABSTRACT Over the past two decades, building culture has increasingly caught the attention of the architectural and planning professions. The building culture is to be understood in the broadest sense as the sum of all cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological factors influencing the quality and process of planning and construction. While the revitalisation and promotion of building culture is central to discussions on urban areas, these are generally ignored in regard to rural areas. This article aims to provide an overview of how building culture has been promoted in Germany's rural areas, thereby contributing to international research on this topic. The paper adopts a general descriptive approach in examining the promotion of building culture in rural Germany. It provides background knowledge on institutional promotion and demonstrates the diverse approaches implemented in representative villages as best practices examples. The German experience confirms that the promotion of building culture is a meaningful and effective measure to help revitalise rural areas. Moreover, the three selected rural municipalities show how stakeholders from civil society are increasingly involved in measures to implement and promote building culture in the local context.

KEYWORDS building culture, *Baukultur*, rural Germany, institutional promotion, rural revitalisation, civil society initiative

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, building culture has increasingly caught the attention of the architectural and planning professions. In his book *The Culture of Building* from 1999, Howard Davis noted that 'all buildings are ultimately the products of building cultures—complex systems of people, relationships, rules, and habits in which design and building are anchored.' Accordingly, he defined building culture as a 'coordinated system of knowledge, rules, procedures, and habits that surrounds the building process in a given place and time' (Davis 2006).

Interest in building culture can be traced back to the discussion of the 1960s on how to make cities and urban spaces more liveable. At that time, leading researchers such as William H. Whyte (1956, 1980), Jane Jacobs (1982) and Jan Gehl (1987) widened the focus of urban research to include the study of the quality of life and community well-being. Correspondingly, greater emphasis was placed on the involvement of grassroots stakeholders, particularly ordinary citizens and civil societies,

in the decision-making processes of urban planning (Arnstein 1969).

In recent years, the promotion of resource-efficient development as a response to climate change as well as social and economic added-value for an inclusive development have fostered demand for high quality and indeed holistic planning and building that incorporates social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects to achieve high aesthetic standards and well-being. To this end, the *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities* (2007) declared that *Baukultur* (i.e. building culture) is to be understood in the broadest sense as the sum of all cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological factors influencing the quality and process of planning and construction. Subsequently, the German term *Baukultur* has been adopted by a number of other European countries when discussing this matter. Most recently, the Davos Declaration of 2018: *Towards a High-quality Baukultur for Europe* was jointly issued by the Ministers of Culture and Heads of Delegations of the signatories of the European Cultural

Convention and of the observer states of the Council of Europe, as well as representatives from UNESCO, ICCROM, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the Architects' Council of Europe, the European Council of Spatial Planners, ICOMOS International as well as Europa Nostra within the framework of European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. The Davos Declaration underscored the importance of building culture. The Declaration supports the mainstreaming and promotion of ideas and principles of high-quality *Baukultur* to all stakeholders, including members of government and the general public (particularly young people), and highlights every relevant and appropriate pathway for its beneficial impact on society.

A historic milestone occurred on 11 July 2007, when, for the first time in recorded history, a greater proportion of the human population were living in cities than in rural areas. Europe became highly urbanised at a much earlier stage: According to UN statistics, the continent's urban population surpassed that of rural areas by 1950. At this time less than 20% of the population of Africa and Asia was urbanised. By 2015, the proportion of urban residents rose greatly in Africa and Asia to 40.4% and 48.2% respectively. Although the rate of urbanisation in Europe has slowed down in comparison to Africa and Asia, the share of the total population living in urban areas rose to almost three quarters by 2015 (Eurostat 2016). Clearly, the intertwined processes of urbanisation and urban growth are the dominant megatrends in today's world, even in Europe, where urbanisation over the past half century can be described as slow and continuous. In reaction to this ongoing process, in 1997 the EU issued the communication *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union* aimed at promoting urban development in the decades to follow.

One pertinent question is often ignored in discussions on urbanisation: What are those new urban residents leaving behind? This is not only relevant to countries currently undergoing rapid urbanisation but also in highly urbanised Europe, where the borders between cities and rural surroundings are blurred. While scholars state that the prerequisites and conditions for life in the countryside are changing, these are not recognised and commented on to the same extent as urban conditions (Koolhaas 2014; Pollak 2011). Despite their diverse political, economic and cultural backgrounds, the world's rural areas have many challenges in common due to urbanisation. The most important are population loss, decaying building stock as well as insufficient public resources, both technical

and social (Penke 2012; BMVBS 2013). These conditions exacerbate the difficult and often conflicting activities related to the preservation and development of building culture in rural areas. The aim of preserving valuable historical buildings is often undermined by the distressing banality of new neighbouring buildings. However, while the revitalisation and promotion of the building culture is central to discussions on urban areas, these are generally ignored in regard to rural areas. To this end, it is vital to examine the issue of building culture in rural areas in order to meet the challenges they face.

Europe is generally characterised by a high number of relatively small cities and towns that are distributed in a polycentric fashion (Eurostat 2016, 9). This pattern has resulted in a large number of small cities and towns as well as villages that are of high value in terms of cultural heritage. After the EU published its *Green Paper on the Urban Environment* in 1990, building culture has been quickly established in European countries as a focal point for contemporary discussions conducted by the architectural and planning profession as well as by policymakers and the general public. However, even with the declaration of the Leipzig Charter in 2007, the concern of building culture was explicitly confined to urban areas. It was only with the Davos Declaration of 2018 that interest turned to peripheral or rural areas and their interconnectivity. This was also reflected in practice. Previously, action in rural areas largely revolved around the provision of technical and social infrastructure. It is only in recent years that the various stakeholders have agreed that the problems afflicting rural areas require a more holistic perspective, one that pays more attention to the promotion of building culture.

To this end, the current article intends to provide an overview of how building culture has been promoted in Germany's rural areas, thereby contributing to international research on this topic.

Methodologies and Terminologies

Methodologies

The paper reviews the promotion of building culture in rural Germany from a theoretical as well as a practical perspective. The first section provides some background knowledge on the institutional promotion of building culture in the country's rural areas. A review of publications, including research reports, policy documents as well as news releases, are the main sources of information. In addition, an expert interview was conducted to exemplify the way in which the everyday practice of social research

often diverges from the theoretical consideration of this practice (Bogner and Menz 2009). Specifically, a referent at the Division of *Baukultur* and Urban Architectural Conservation in the German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), was interviewed to provide 'crystallisation points' for institutional and practical insider knowledge. She represents a wider circle of stakeholders.

Buildings are a defining feature of human existence. Wherever human or social development has been documented throughout history, this has largely been realised through the built environment. To this end, the project follows a case study approach, as this allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings (Crowe et al. 2011). The second section introduces selected model projects to illustrate the conditions under which building culture emerges as well as how municipalities and local stakeholders deal with the respective challenges, problems and other issues arising from spatial disparities in building culture in Germany. Based on a literature review and survey of nominated good practices in the promotion of building culture at federal and state level, as well as model projects from bottom-up initiatives and foundations dealing with building culture, this paper selects three cases, representing three different situations in terms of the geographical and socio-economic conditions that reflect the promotion of building culture in rural Germany.

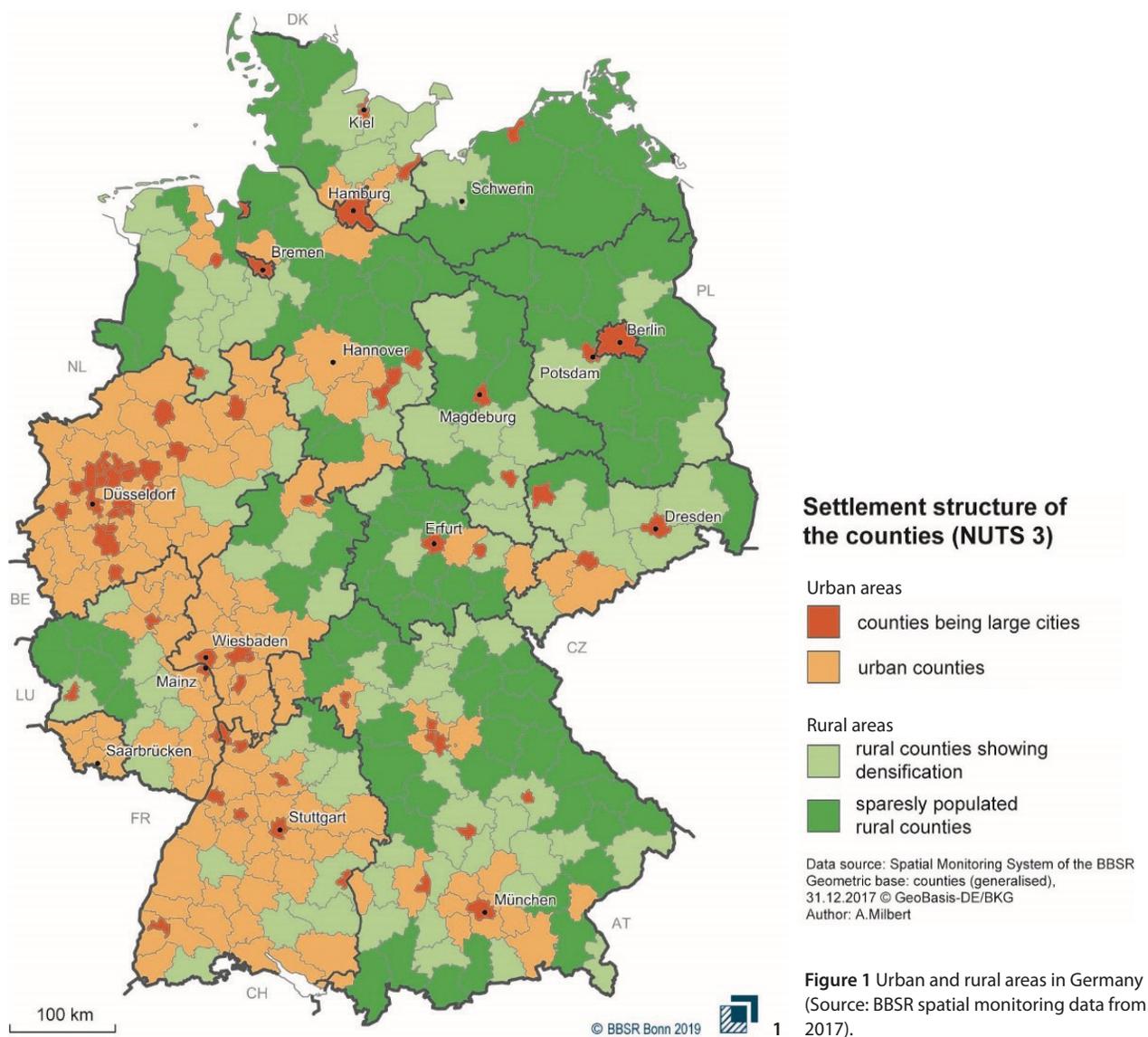
Terminologies

The comparative analysis of international spatial studies is hindered by the lack of a clear definition of two basic terms: urban and rural areas (Dijkstra and Poelman 2014, 2). One widely-recognised definition of rural areas, which comes from UNDP reports (UNDP 2018), applies population thresholds to simplify the spatial classification into a two-way split between urban areas and rural areas. Some organisations, for instance the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) define rural areas as communities with population densities below 150 inhabitants per km². For practical reasons, the OECD considers clusters of territorial units classified into three types depending on the proportion of the regional population living in rural areas, namely predominantly rural (>50%), intermediate (15–50%) and predominantly urbanised (<15%) (OECD 1994). Eurostat applies the geo-referencing of statistical data to define rural areas as all areas outside urban clusters. According to Eurostat, urban clusters are clusters of contiguous grid cells of 1 km² with a density

of at least 300 inhabitants per km² and a minimum population of 5,000 (Eurostat online 2019). In Germany, the definition of rural areas is based on the spatial planning level and takes the following factors into account: population density, centrality and accessibility (Franzen et al. 2008, 2). Generally, rural areas are merely regarded as a category of non-urban areas (BMVBS 2013; Crowe et al. 2011; Franzen et al. 2008). In 2011 the BBSR proposed a strict definition: All administratively independent cities and urban counties form urban areas and all rural counties form rural areas (Figure 1). Accordingly, while rural areas make up 60% of the state territory, only 18.1% of the population live there and they provide just under 11% of jobs (BBSR 2010a). However, there is a wide agreement in German academic and political circles on the necessity of taking a more differentiated view of rural areas, one that reflects the diversity of spatial functions and developments as well as the increasing disparities. Hence, rural areas should no longer be classified into just one spatial category (Franzen et al. 2008; Küpper 2016; BMEL 2018).

Institutional Promotion of Building Culture in Rural Areas

Since the turn of the millennium, the topic of building culture has attracted much public attention in Germany. In 2000 the Initiative Architecture and Building Culture was established on behalf of the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing as well as the chambers, associations and cultural institutions of the building industry in Germany. The initiative aimed to establish a dedicated communication platform on issues related to building culture, to encourage various stakeholders to get involved in the activation and promotion of building culture, as well as to disseminate and foster an awareness of building culture amongst the general public. Since 2004 the term *Baukultur* is anchored in the general provisions of the Federal Building Code (Baugesetzbuch, BauGB) regarding urban land use planning in §1 Paragraph 6: 'In the preparation of the land use plans, particular consideration must be given to the interests of building culture, the requirements relating to the preservation and maintenance of historic monuments, districts, streets and squares of historical, artistic or architectural significance, as well as to the shaping of the town and landscape.' (BauGB 2018) Concrete planning and approval of projects takes place directly in the municipalities, which are responsible for implementation and compliance with the requirements



of the Federal Building Code as well as all other building regulations and codes. This includes the implementation of the building culture concept.

The work of the Initiative Architecture and Building Culture resulted in the establishment of two further institutions. The first of these, the Federal Foundation for Building Culture (Bundesstiftung Baukultur) was established in 2008 (Bundesstiftung Baukultur 2019). The second, the BBSR, came into being in 2009 through a merger of the science department of the BBR and the Institute for Rehabilitation and Modernisation of Buildings (IEMB) (BBSR, 2019). While the main focus of the work of the Foundation for Building Culture and the BBSR is on urban areas, they also deal with building culture in rural areas. In particular, from 2011–2013 the BBSR carried out a study on building culture in rural areas (Baukultur in ländlichen Räumen) to explore the potential of building

culture in rural Germany. By identifying exemplary rural communities through the country and examining their respective strategies to promote building culture, the study acknowledged the importance of a bottom-up approach conducted through civil society.

In addition, new research projects such as *Building Culture in Practice and Municipal Competence on Building Culture* confirm that municipalities have been placing greater importance on building culture in recent years. These projects showed that building culture can only be preserved and promoted in each municipality if political and administrative representatives form an alliance with initiatives and economic actors from civil society (BBSR 2016a). Based on this finding, the research project *Building Culture Concrete*, which ran from 2014–2016, aimed to extend the knowledge base of the country's initiatives in support of building culture. In a first step, the project

Table 1 Relative share of increased land take for settlement and transportation areas for different spatial categories in Germany from 2011 to 2016 (Source: Krüger et al. 2017, 7).

Types of areas according to BBSR's definition of spatial categories	Share of increased land use for settlement and transportation areas of total
Central cities of metropolitan regions	0.1%
Complementary area to the central cities	1.2%
Closer commuter areas to the central cities	11.2%
Extended commuter areas to the central cities	29.3%
Area outside metropolitan regions	58.2%

identified and analysed the barriers or restrictions on the activities of local initiatives to promote building culture. In addition, professional support was offered in the implementation of building culture initiatives and projects by means of concrete interactions. Within this practical work, a wide range of working and communication strategies of building culture initiatives were tested and evaluated with regard to their suitability and (impulse) effect (BBSR 2018a, 6). Alongside the project report, a book entitled *Building Culture Recipes* (BBSR 2017a) was published to provide inspiration to other projects by describing new ideas and model approaches. Although these approaches are not specific to rural areas, an important part of the project was to attend to the needs of rural areas. In the ongoing project, *Building Culture and Tourism—Cooperation in the Region*, launched in July 2016, rural areas are at the heart of research activities. Through seven model approaches, the project aims to determine how the cooperation of building culture and tourism in rural areas can be strengthened and which tools are suitable for this (BBSR 2016b).

In addition to support at the national level, state governments also have specific platforms to promote building culture. In Baden-Württemberg, for example, the institutional platform for the promotion of building culture is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Employment and Housing (Baukultur BW 2018). The platform provides detailed knowledge of building culture such as its meaning in different contexts and how various stakeholders are involved in related practices. Furthermore, the embedded network holds regular network conferences, provides support to initiative groups, helps in the organisation of building culture events, discusses the treatment of special topics in working groups, and builds strategic partnerships in research, implementation and education. In addition, the platform provides a database of good practices in building culture in Baden-Württemberg in order to assist local politicians, interested citizens, academics and professionals in tackling the manifold

problems related to building culture development. These instances of best practice for building culture in rural areas can be seen as comparable to those in urban areas.

Best Practices

Selection of Best Practice Examples

The spatial structure of Germany is characterised by a relatively balanced and decentralised concentration of population, workplaces and infrastructure in cities, urban regions and urban agglomerations along with large and contiguous rural areas (BBR 2001, 7). Currently, the country is experiencing a process of re-urbanisation that is strengthening cities and urban agglomerations, while, simultaneously, rural areas are suffering from the effects of shrinkage. These processes of contraction apply both to economic and demographic development, and of course are mutually reinforcing (BBSR 2010b, 2017b). However, there is no simple positive correlation between population development (or economic growth) and the increased incorporation of land for settlement and transportation areas (in the following: land take) (Spars 2005; Krüger et al. 2017). For instance, Table 1 gives an overview of the relative per-capita land take for municipalities of different spatial characteristics from 2009 to 2014. We can see that land take per person is highest in peripheral regions such as extended commuter areas of metropolitan areas as well as areas outside metropolitan regions. Altogether (totals of all per-capita values of land take), these municipalities account for about 88% of the total extent of newly incorporated settlement and transportation areas, despite the fact that they account for only around 40% of Germany's population (Krüger et al. 2017). The impact of this development trend can be seen in the contrast between poorly maintained or abandoned old (historical) buildings in the centres of rural municipalities and the distressing banality of settlement expansion. This is the main challenge facing Germany in the promotion of building culture in rural areas.

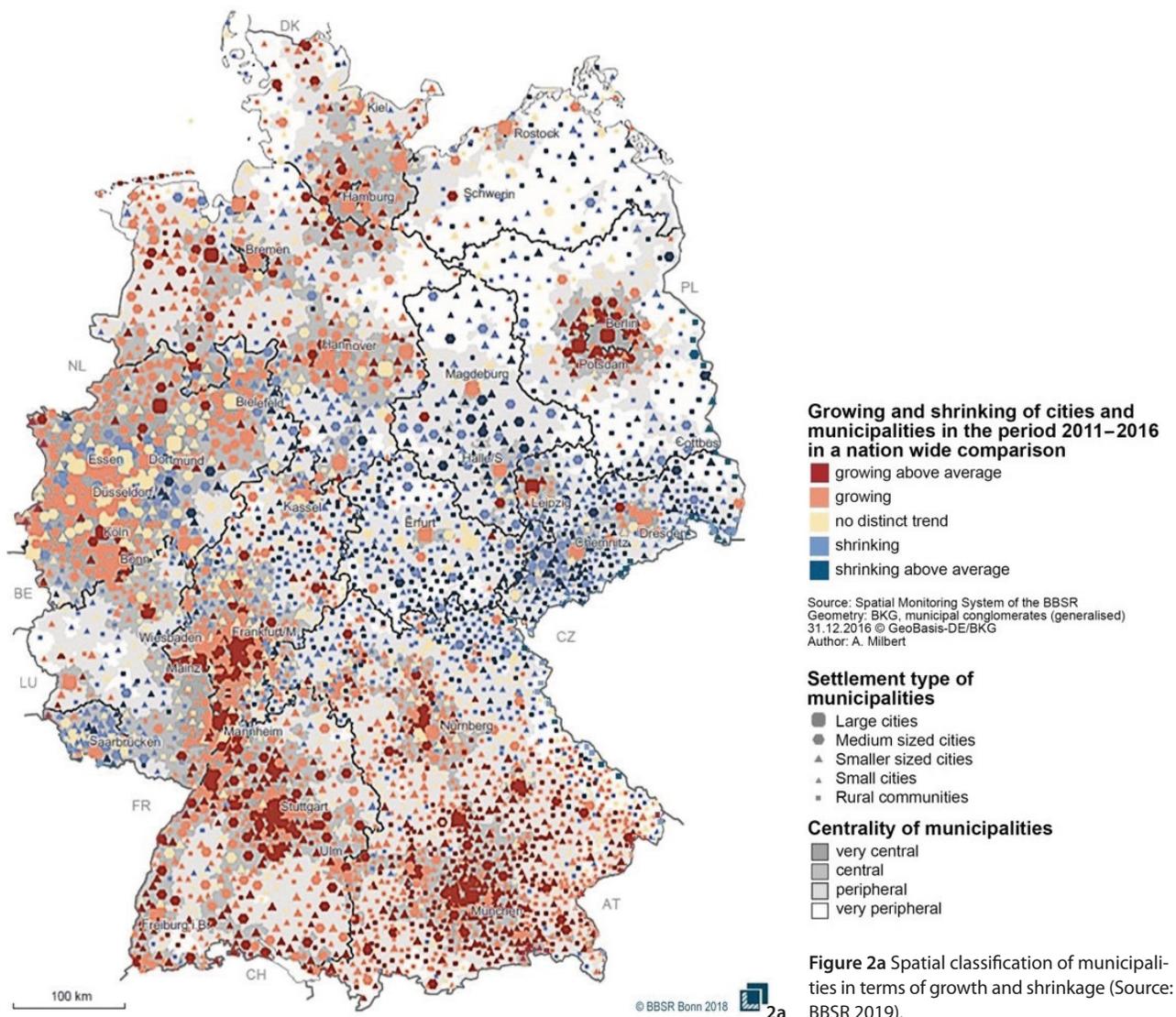


Figure 2a Spatial classification of municipalities in terms of growth and shrinkage (Source: BBSR 2019).

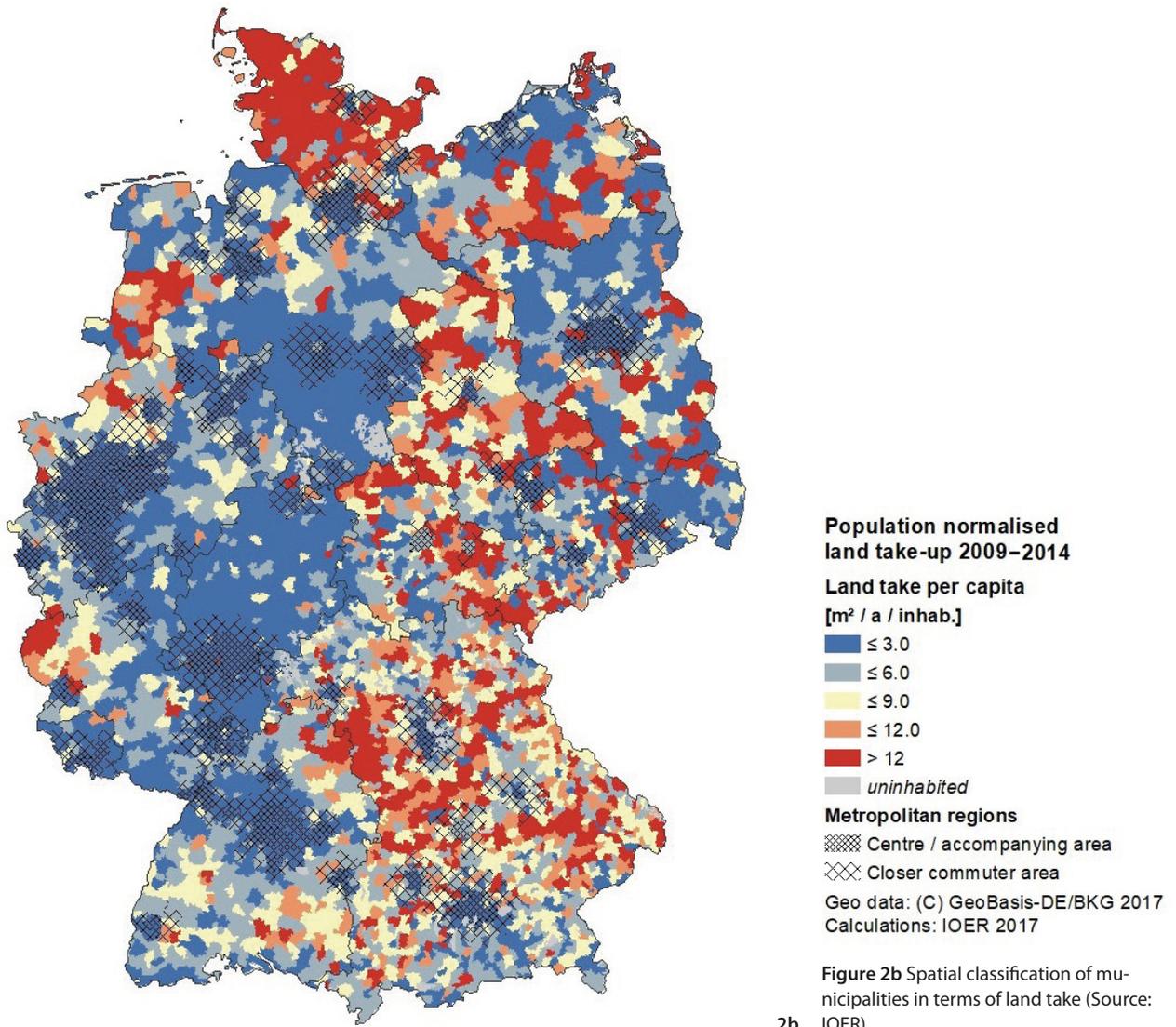
To this end, best practice examples in this paper are selected according to the following criteria: (1) the spatial characterisation of the rural municipality, i.e. its geographical location in relation to metropolitan areas (Figure 2a, Figure 2b); (2) the representative nature of the approaches. The first case of Baiersbronn represents rural municipalities outside metropolitan regions and an approach guided by the local government. The second case of Leiferde represents rural municipalities in closer commuter areas to the central cities (i.e. Wolfsburg, Hanover and Braunschweig) and an approach driven by a civil society initiative based on economic promotion (creation of working places). The third case of Baruth/Mark represents rural areas in extended commuter areas to the central cities (i.e. Berlin) and an approach driven by a civil society initiative with a cultural and ecological focus.

The following introduction to the best practice examples highlights the diverse approaches implemented to

reflect the different economic conditions of rural areas. While the specific details of individual projects are not discussed, land use plans are provided for the entire administrative area of each rural municipality in order to illustrate the geographical and economic status of the selected best practice examples.

The Case of Baiersbronn

Baiersbronn is a rural municipality in Baden-Württemberg, one of Germany's wealthiest states (Figure 3). Located in the northern Black Forest, it is the second largest municipality (189.7 km²) after the state capital Stuttgart and is Baden-Württemberg's most popular tourist destination. In December 2017 the population of Baiersbronn was 14,565, scattered between nine administrative districts (Gemeinde Baiersbronn 2019). The municipality's main economic activities are upscale tourism and gastronomy; in fact, it has the country's highest density of gourmet



restaurants per inhabitant. In addition, the timber industry and supporting businesses are also very important for the regional economy. However, the municipality's remote location (one hour from the nearest motorway) makes it rather difficult and costly to transport timber products. One key challenge facing Baiersbronn is the loss of its young people: About 30% of citizens aged 25–35 have either left in recent years or not returned after completing their studies. In addition, fewer tourists are coming: The number of overnight stays have dropped by about half since the 1980s.

In 2009 the municipality, with its nine administrative districts, started to develop an overall strategy within the framework Baiersbronn 2020, accompanied by a broad public discussion on various issues including administration, family, commerce and tourism, culture and customs, ecology, agriculture and economy. This resulted in a book *Building Culture in Baiersbronn—A Design Handbook*

for Architecture and Town Development (Baukultur in Baiersbronn—ein Gestaltungshandbuch für Architektur und Städtebau), which includes a historical review and functions as a reference work for future development. In Baiersbronn, public participation is recognised as a constructive instrument for collaborative work among different stakeholders. A total of eight workshops were held in 2010 and 2011, attended by politicians, administrators, tourists and citizens. The largest event, dedicated to the topic of building culture/atmosphere, aimed to answer the basic question: 'Is there a regional building culture in Baiersbronn?' In addition, an award for property developers was established to recognise positive examples of the promotion of building culture in the municipality, and thereby motivate and inspire other local actors.

In this context, some historic buildings have been carefully renovated and converted to new purposes. For instance, the award for the protection of historical

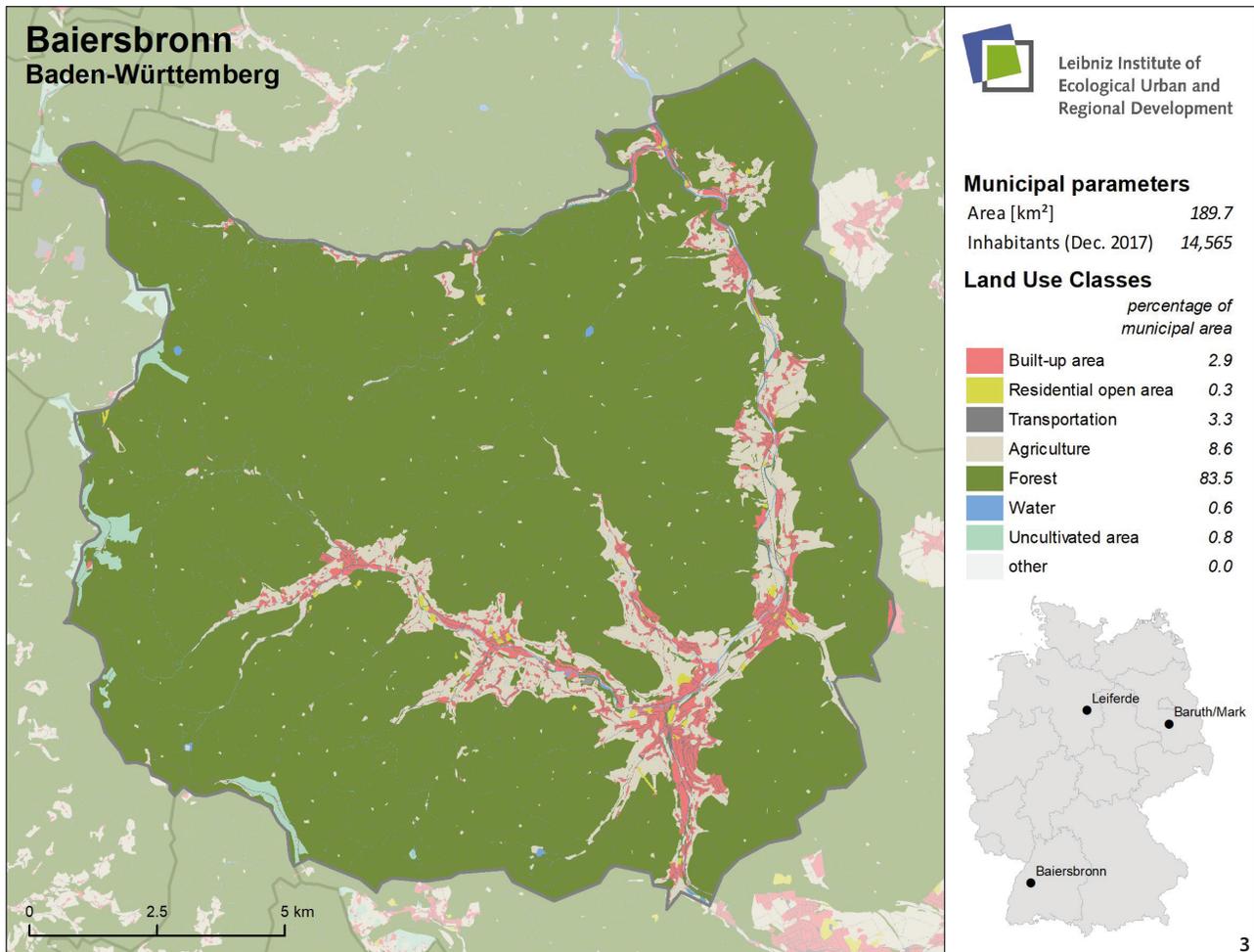


Figure 3 Land use in the rural municipality of Leiferde (Source: IOER Monitor 2019, Geobasis-DE/BKG 2018).

buildings and monuments of Baden-Württemberg was given in 2008 to a project aimed at the careful restoration of the Morlokhof farmhouse. Further, the establishment of the award has led to the creation of high quality private buildings, for example the recently constructed 'Single-Family House K' for which the developer received the wooden structure prize of Baden-Württemberg. In addition, emphasis is placed on the use of local workers and materials in various projects to strengthen the regional identification of building culture. For instance, one central concept was to commission local craftsmen to use timber from local forests in the renovation of the tourist information centre. Moreover, reflecting the traditional industrial base, timber has become an important component of the local building culture and has been carefully marketed as such. For example, in 2017 the municipality hosted the event 'Building Culture—Traditional and Modern Wooden Building Design in a Lively Municipality (Baukultur—Traditioneller und moderner Holzbau in einer vitalen Gemeinde)'.⁷

The Case of Leiferde

The rural municipality of Leiferde in Lower Saxony encompasses the administrative districts of Leiferde and Dalldorf, which have around 4,100 and 450 inhabitants respectively (Gemeinde Leiferde 2019) (Figure 4). The village of Leiferde is made up of two very different parts, each with a characteristic townscape: The old village centre featuring numerous historic farms and the later railway settlement which grew up around the new railway station at the end of the 19th century and which later expanded to cope with an influx of refugees after the Second World War. The municipality covers an area of 27.9 km² and is situated between the three large cities of Hanover, Braunschweig and Wolfsburg. Due to structural shifts in the agricultural sector, many of the farm buildings in the old centre have fallen into disrepair or are only partially used. A very important chapter in the successful revitalisation of the old village is related to two women who re-started their careers in rural areas.

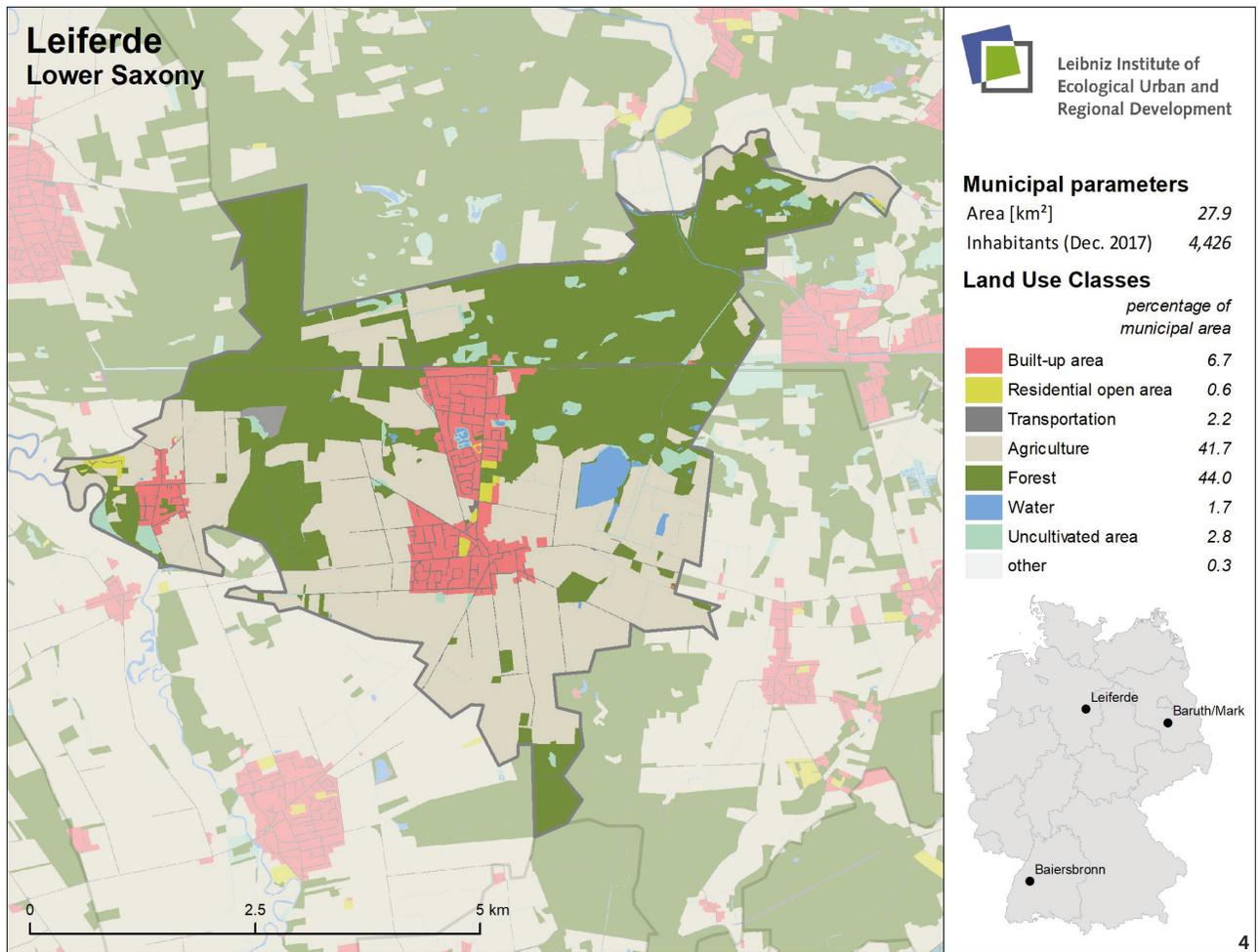


Figure 4 Land use in the rural municipality of Baiersbronn (Source: IOER Monitor 2019, Geobasis-DE/BKG 2018).

In the region where Leiferde is located, the automobile industry is the backbone of the local economy and at the same time the largest employer. In this region, career choices for women are relatively limited. Particularly in the villages, there are hardly any career opportunities for women who wish to re-enter the labour market after several years of child-raising. Against this background, in 2001 a female architect and a female engineer jointly founded the office Althaus-Konzept in a rundown former farm. By renovating the farm, they intended to create a cultural and social centre in the heart of the village, thereby contributing to local revitalisation. To this end, they set up a civil society association, called Markthof, in addition to their ordinary work in the design and engineer office Althaus-Konzept. The renovated farm in the former village centre, renamed UNSAhof, is a project of Markthof. It now serves as a business incubator for women in the areas of sales, services and further education who can make joint use of the infrastructure and support each other in marketing and events. This project has preserved

traditional buildings, improved the quality of life in the villages and created jobs for women.

The Case of Baruth/Mark

Baruth/Mark in Brandenburg, which is situated about 60 km to the south of the German capital Berlin, is made up by 12 administrative districts and shows a largely intact rural character (Figure 5). Covering an area of about 233.8 km², the population of Baruth/Mark was 4,137 at the end of 2017, giving it an extremely low population density of 18 inhabitants per km² (Baruth/Mark 2019). The main challenges facing the municipality are those related to demographic change, i.e. low birth rates and an ageing population in all of the 12 districts. Civil initiatives and associations have been actively promoting building culture in Baruth/Mark for more than two decades.

In 1997 five artist couples moved into an abandoned school building in Baruth to found the 'Alte Schule' Art and Culture Association Baruth. After converting former

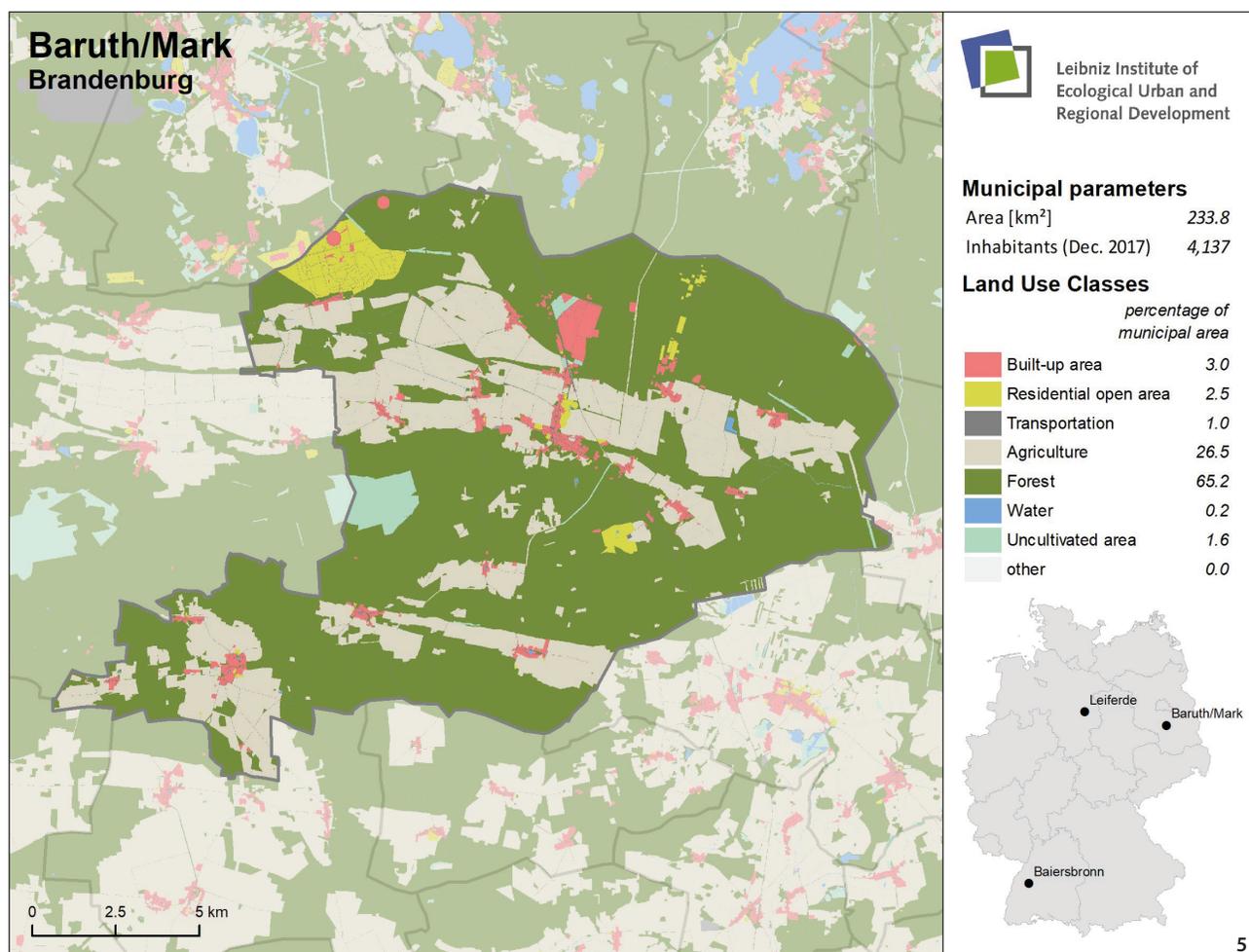


Figure 5 Land use in the rural municipality of Baruth/Mark (Source: IOER Monitor 2019, Geobasis-DE/BKG 2018).

classrooms into studios and flats, they quickly organised their first exhibition entitled ‘The Discovery of Leisure Time’ in the adjacent former gymnasium. Subsequently, the association established itself as an art and architecture centre for an interested professional audience in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. Every year an exhibition is held in late summer/autumn in the old school building for 4–6 weeks, winding up with a closing event and dinner for the artists and association members. Concerts, readings and film screenings also take place as part of the annual exhibition and at smaller events. The exhibits include sculpture, photography, paintings, videos and installations, reflecting the diverse work of the artists involved (Alte Schule Baruth 2019).

In 2004 some members of the Art and Culture Association formed the association I-KU (Institute for the Development of Rural Cultural Area) to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience in the fields of agriculture, sustainability, culture and energy landscape. The founding concept of I-KU is to develop Baruth/Mark as an attractive location for casual visitors and not merely for

experts. The work of the I-KU is based on participation and exchange between different stakeholders and interest groups. Collective learning processes are initiated and holistic concepts are developed to bring together cultural scientists and landscape designers, artists and local entrepreneurs, politics and administration (Baruth/Mark 2019). For instance, I-KU organises the so-called Baruth Talks, an information and discussion platform on socio-political-cultural events in rural areas such as symposia on new perspectives for local action, creative economic activities in rural areas or new potentials brought by renewable energies. The I-KU initiative provides a model of how a small town can profit from long-term and continuous commitment (I-KU 2019). While good building culture is not the primary goal of its work, I-KU produces real results in this area (BMVBS 2013, 81).

Conclusion

Building culture always manifests itself locally. In this way, it is the counterpart to globalisation, providing

people with a place to lay roots and create a sense of home (BMVBS 2013). Compared to cities, rural areas are less connected to globalised networks. Yet rural areas do not merely possess an idyllic image; they also display higher social cohesion than urban areas (Andrews 2011; He and Xie 2017). Therefore, the promotion of building culture in rural areas is a meaningful and effective measure, one that contributes to revitalisation (as confirmed by the experiences in Germany). The BBSR's project experience shows how stakeholders from civil society are becoming increasingly involved in measures to implement and promote building culture in the local context.

A range of initiatives, associations and individuals are voluntarily working to raise the quality of the local built and lived environment. Considering this situation, one of the goals of German federal policy on building culture is to support this commitment on the part of civil society (BBSR 2018b, 8). Building culture is the result of participative processes that serve to foster social appreciation of our designed environment. In order for these to be successful, it is necessary to improve communication between all of those involved in the construction process as well as to ensure up-to-date participation procedures as a form of building culture mediation (Bundesstiftung Baukultur 2011, 12).

The three cases provide good illustrations of the official statements above. The first, the traditional tourist centre of Baiersbrunn, is located in the wealthy state of Baden-Württemberg. Here the local government has guided the promotion of building culture through various frameworks. In response, the local tourism association, the timber industry, local residents as well as other stakeholders have achieved a win-win situation through their active participation in promotion activities. The two other cases of Leiferde and Baruth/Mark are somewhat different due to their weak local economic conditions, meaning that civil society initiatives have become central in the promotion of building culture. While the starting point and focus of the civil society initiatives are different in these two cases, they share one common factor: While good building culture may not be the primary goal of the work of civil societies, it is a real outcome of their initiatives.

The objective of this article is to provide an overview of how building culture has been promoted in the rural areas of Germany. Therefore, a general descriptive approach has been adopted both in the introduction to institutional promotion as well as in the description of best practice examples. There is no doubt that further studies offering in-depth analysis on specific cases could make useful

contributions to international research on the promotion of building culture in rural areas by exploring the working mechanisms of collaboration between different stakeholders as well as likely trade-offs.

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