



## **SUSTAINABLE INNER CITY CENTRES - CASES FROM GERMANY. INSIGHTS FROM RESEARCH ON PROCESSES, CONCEPTS, TOOLS**

**EUROPAEN LECTURE SERIES ORGANIZED BY AESOP  
THEMATIC GROUP SMALL TOWNS**

**„SMALL TOWNS IN FOCUS – MULTI-DEIMENSIONAL  
PERSPECTIVES ON TODAY’S CHALLENGES“**

**17.11.2025**

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## TRANSITION OF (INNER) CITIES

### THE CITY CENTRE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE OF INTENSE ADAPTATION



*Historical: crafts, middle class*

...



*...then car-friendly...*



*...then tailored to the customer...*



*... people-friendly?  
Resilient? Sustainable?  
Back to the roots?  
Mixed use!*

## APPROACH, GOAL AND PURPOSE OF PROGRAM „ZIZ“

„The aim is to support cities and municipalities in **overcoming acute and structural problems** in city centers [...] by (further) developing them into **multifunctional, resilient and cooperative places** as places of identification.“

- **Overcoming monofunctional structures** and urban spaces
- **Revitalizing the centers** through new uses as well
- **Establishing new stakeholder cooperation** to bring together different requirements and potentials
- **Upgrading urban spaces**
- Promoting **resilience** and crisis management

Gefördert durch:



Bundesministerium  
für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung  
und Bauwesen

aufgrund eines Beschlusses  
des Deutschen Bundestages

Zukunftsfähige   
Innenstädte und Zentren

*up to € 250 million in funding  
(between € 200.000 und max. € 5 million)*

*217 supported cities and municipalities*

*duration: 2022 - Nov. 2025*

Sustainable city centres and town  
centres

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

cross-section  
(n=217 municipalities)

- Systematic recording of structural data in the **project database**
- Review of **primary data** (grant applications, municipal status reports, ...)
- One-off **online survey** 2024

case studies  
(n= 30+x)

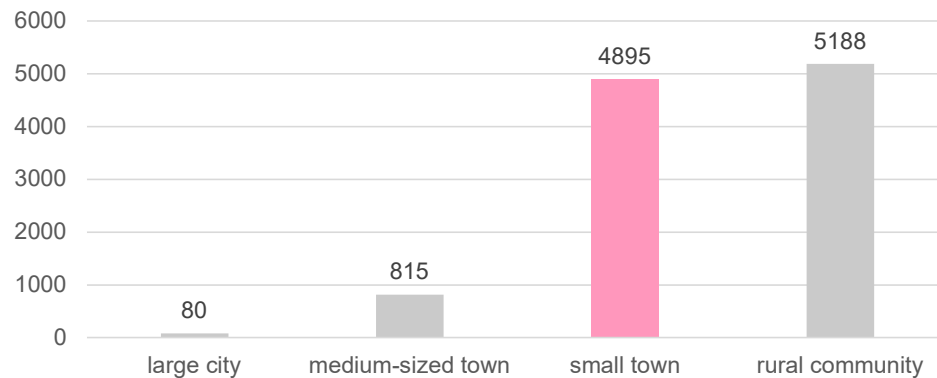
- **Interviews** und **visits**
- **Press and document analysis** (e.g. of the concepts)
- Personal exchange at **network meetings, congresses** and in **peer-to-peer format**

quantitative  
-----  
qualitative

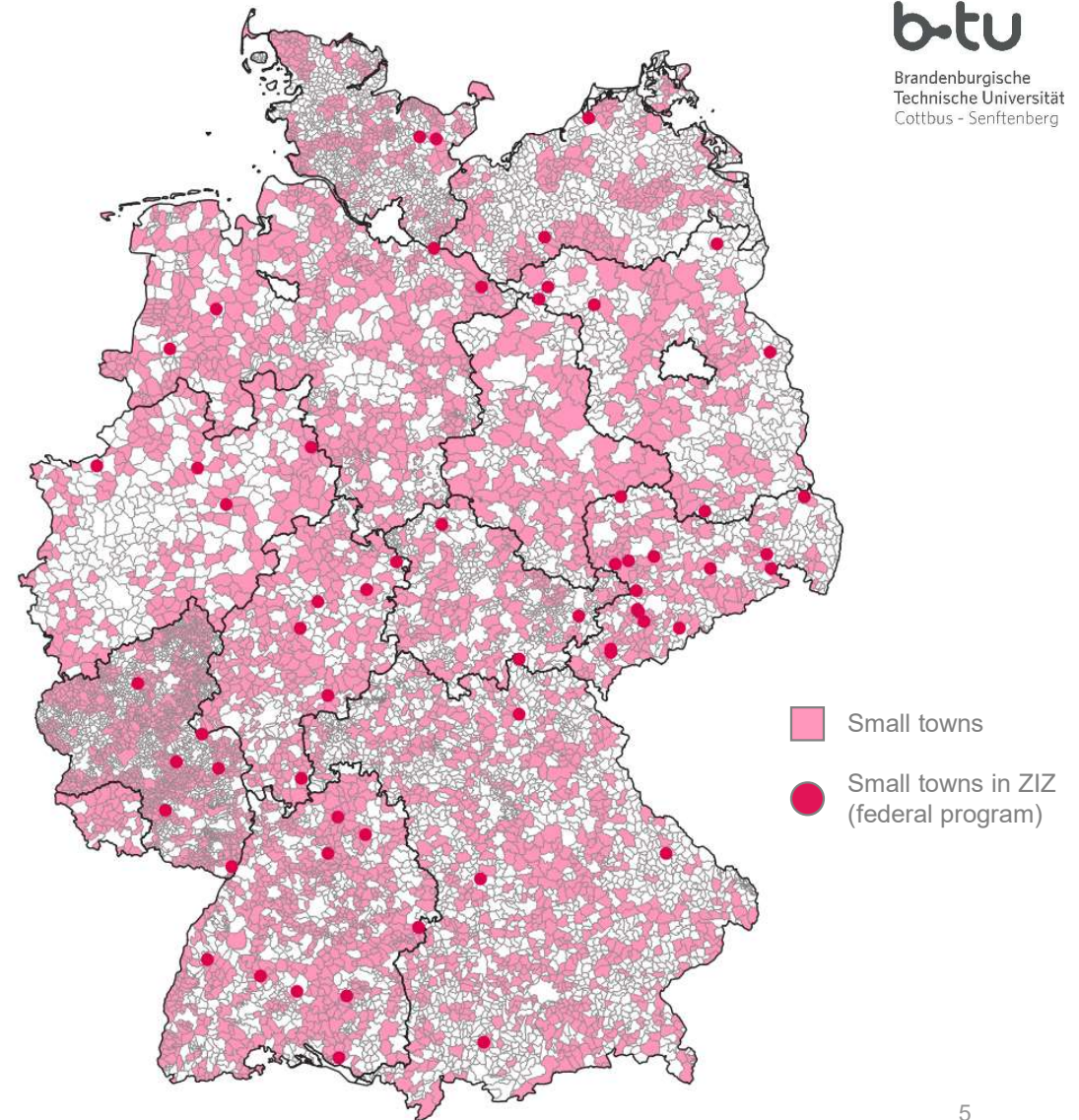
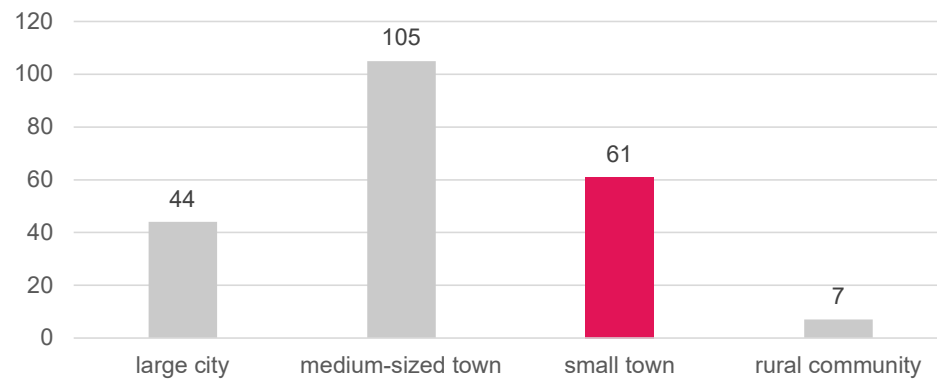


## SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SMALL TOWNS

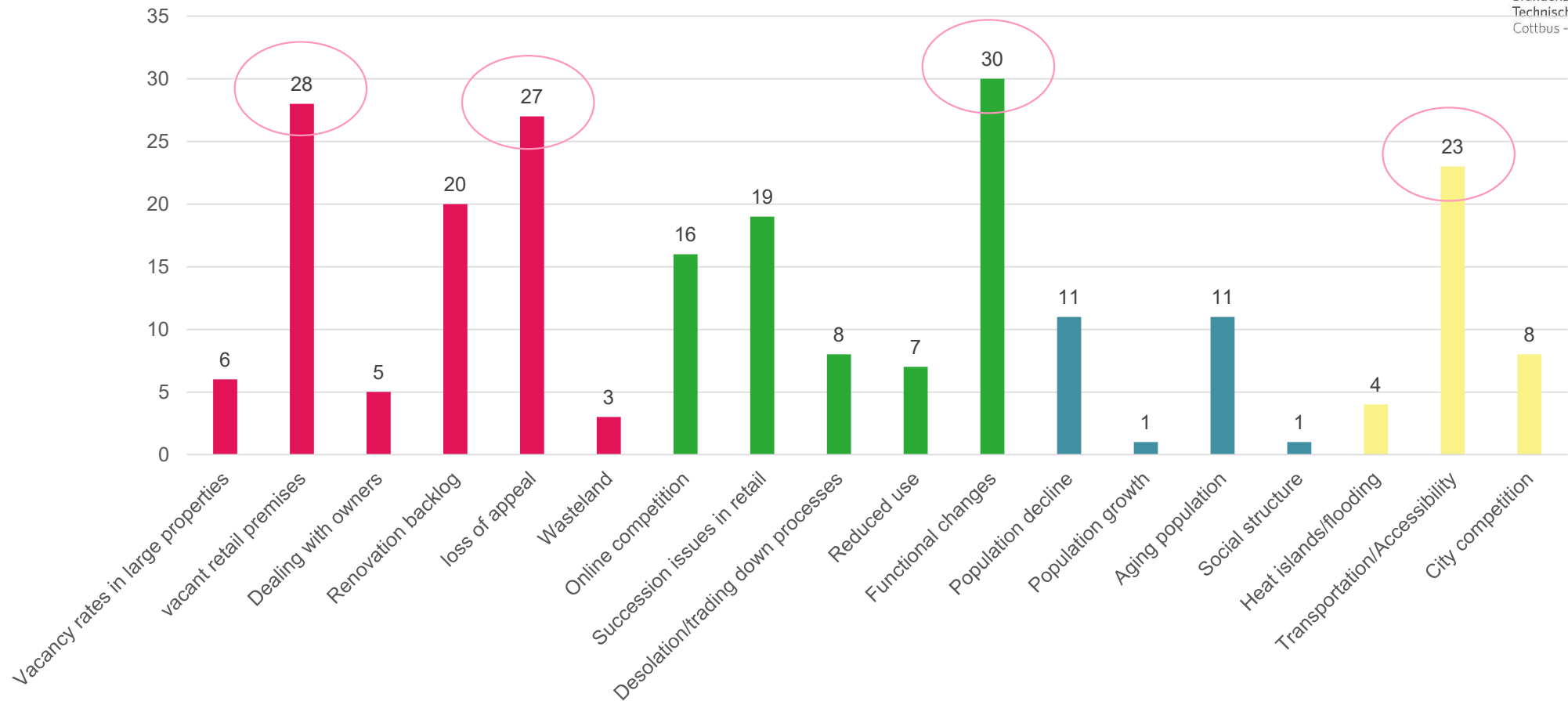
10.979 municipalities throughout Germany



217 municipalities in the **ZIZ** federal program



## THE SITUATION IN SMALL TOWNS IN 2021 (ZIZ)



Urban appearance and real estate industry

Multifunctionality

Demographics and  
social affairs

Other

## APPROACHES AND SUCCESS FACTORS (ZIZ)

Awareness raising (joint task) | Citizen participation | **external project support** | Initiative and volunteer work | Experimental nature and temporary interventions | early, transparent, and continuous communication | interdisciplinary project teams | Willingness of the administration to compromise and try new things | short communication channels | **Mix & Match (large and small projects)** | Multipliers, advocates, and networks | low threshold | personal contact person (especially city management) | personal contact and outreach work | Added value for stakeholders | **Visible changes and flagship projects** | Creation of a valid data basis | Networking opportunities and exchange of experiences | basis of trust | Interlocking project components | Target group-specific action

## IMPLEMENTATION HURDLES FOR SMALL TOWNS IN THE FEDERAL PROGRAM (ZIZ)

Challenges	big	medium	small
<b>Staff shortages in implementation/staff turnover</b>	10	25	<b>10</b>
Bureaucracy and entrenched administrative structures	8	16	7
<b>Lack of willingness to cooperate/participate</b>	2	15	<b>12</b>
ZIZ program structure	10	10	8
<b>Extensive coordination/coordination</b>	6	13	<b>9</b>
Administrative effort	4	11	7
Skepticism and reservations	0	10	7
Lack of initiative on the part of stakeholders	1	9	4
Award criteria/public procurement law	5	6	2
Regular offers/"staying on the ball"	1	5	4
Scope/fragmentation of measures	3	5	2
Continuation of temporary use/concepts	3	6	1
Different expectations	3	5	1
Lengthy process of building trust	5	1	2

n = 44 large cities  
108 medium-sized cities  
**61 small towns**



## EXAMPLE WITTENBERGE: MARKET OF DIVERSITY

BRANDENBURG | APPROX. 17.000 INHABITANTS

### Initial situation

- **Demographic change:** Sustained population decline due to migration
- Potential of the momentum gained during the coronavirus pandemic in the **digitalization of work** processes (Wittenberge as a residential location with home office opportunities)
- **Large- and small-scale vacancy rates**

### Project idea

- **Action plan** for northern Bahnstraße with a focus on the **Prignitzgalerie** shopping center
- Establishment of a **city center office**
- Leasing of **vacant retail space**
- Events and street furniture



## EXAMPLE WITTENBERGE: MARKET OF DIVERSITY

BRANDENBURG | APPROX. 17.000 INHABITANTS

### Initial experiences and effects

- Creation of a **long-term (strategic) framework** for action through the action strategy, in particular further use options for the Prignitzgalerie / implementation of initial measures already during ZIZ
- City center management (Ansprech.Bar) as a **low-threshold contact point** for urban society and a place for participation → increased acceptance of projects by citizens
- Upgrading of the urban space through art on building gables / **improvement of the quality of stay**
- **Reactivation of four vacant properties** through a vacancy competition, despite the lack of cooperation on the part of the property owners



Gable art © K. Senner

Visit of the Minister of Construction to the Ansprechbar©  
M. Ferch



## EXAMPLE WEIDA: OLD WALLS / NEW USES

THURINGIA | APPROX. 8.000 INHABITANTS

### Initial situation

- **Demographic change** (declining population) is leading to a reduction in the availability of services and housing
- Small-scale vacancies and **vacant historic buildings** that shape the city's identity characterize the cityscape.
  - Osterburg (former youth hostel)
  - „Blaue Schürze“ (former girl's school)
  - Engelsschule
- Lack of development and reuse prospects

### Project idea

- Development of a **city center concept** that takes into account the architectural heritage and increases tourism potential
- Preparation of **feasibility studies** with ideas for the reuse of the three properties
- Comprehensive **citizen participation on objects**





## EXAMPLE WEIDA: OLD WALLS / NEW USES

THURINGIA | APPROX. 8.000 INHABITANTS

### Initial experiences and effects

- Discussion of sustainable uses in several **workshops**, **roundtable discussions** with business owners, and a **large-scale open house** with workshops and guided tours
- High turnout and **positive response with a ripple effect**: City council unanimously approved ideas for reuse
  - Osterburg: Accommodation and catering
  - „Blaue Schürze“: Residential and commercial premises
  - Engelsschule: multifunctional educational institution in the field of crafts
- Reservations and skepticism were dispelled
  - **Raising awareness and increasing acceptance!**



## RESULTS/ EFFECTS ZIZ

- **Taking responsibility for the city center**
- **Networking and cooperation**
- Development of a long-term action plan
- Increased attractiveness through visibility
- Sense of community through activities and events
- Quality of stay through attractive offers
- Revitalization through mixed use
- **Encounter and participation**
- Increase in brand awareness/image
- Participatory projects increase solidarity/identification
- New players = new ideas and perspectives
- Optimism
- Public opinion more visible in administration
- Activation of private engagement
- **Innovative power of new (retail) concepts/experimental nature**
- trust building
- ...



approx. **550**  
**participants**  
in the six digital peer-to-  
peer online meetings  
(thematic)

Over **600**  
**participants**  
At the five network  
meetings



>> **STRONG NETWORK**

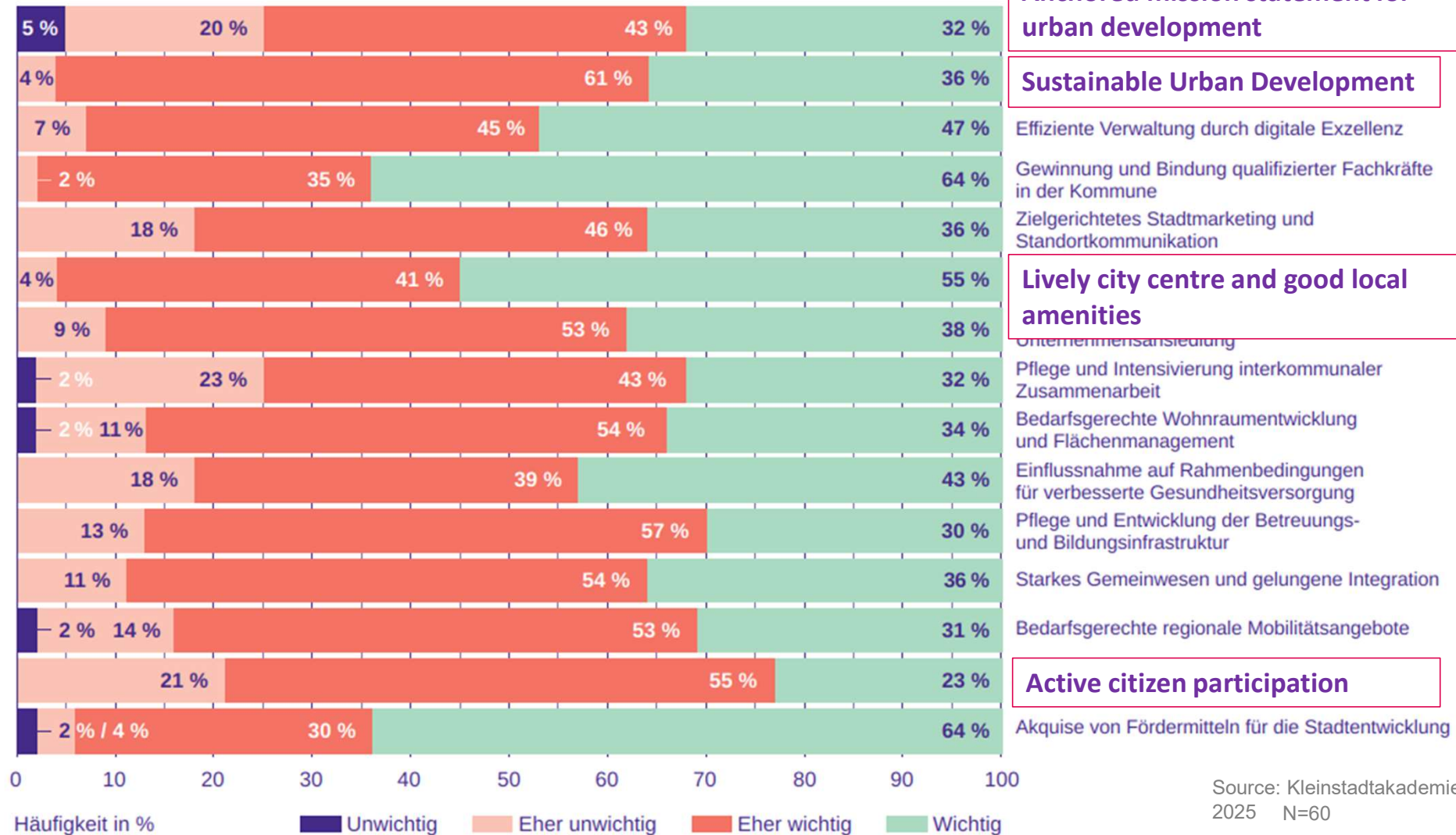


## INNERCITY CENTERS IN PLANNING CONCEPTS

### WHAT NEEDS TO BE PRESERVED OR CREATED (PLANNING) ...

- Trade as the reason for the emergence of cities, but no longer thinking of city centres and EG zones solely in terms of (chain) retail: **genuine mixed use, both vertically and horizontally**, in buildings
- Agora as a place for meeting, free expression of opinion and communication: “**public living room**”
- Attractiveness, experience, reasons to visit, "beauty"/aesthetics as a value (quality of stay including light, digital offerings and safety) in terms of **building culture**
- Accessibility and availability for all on foot, by bike, motorised individual transport, public transport (including (small-scale) logistics): new mobility, **transport transition**
- Anchors of various kinds, mix of uses including supply, work (commerce, crafts, urban production, training), living, experience and relaxation (culture, art, commercial and non-commercial stays), sport, play: colourful mix of functions, both vertically and horizontally in the buildings; **non-commercial areas**

## SMALL TOWN SURVEY



Anchored mission statement for urban development

Sustainable Urban Development

Effiziente Verwaltung durch digitale Exzellenz

Gewinnung und Bindung qualifizierter Fachkräfte in der Kommune

Zielgerichtetes Stadtmarketing und Standortkommunikation

Lively city centre and good local amenities

Unternehmensansiedlung

Pflege und Intensivierung interkommunaler Zusammenarbeit

Bedarfsgerechte Wohnraumentwicklung und Flächenmanagement

Einflussnahme auf Rahmenbedingungen für verbesserte Gesundheitsversorgung

Pflege und Entwicklung der Betreuungs- und Bildungsinfrastruktur

Starkes Gemeinwesen und gelungene Integration

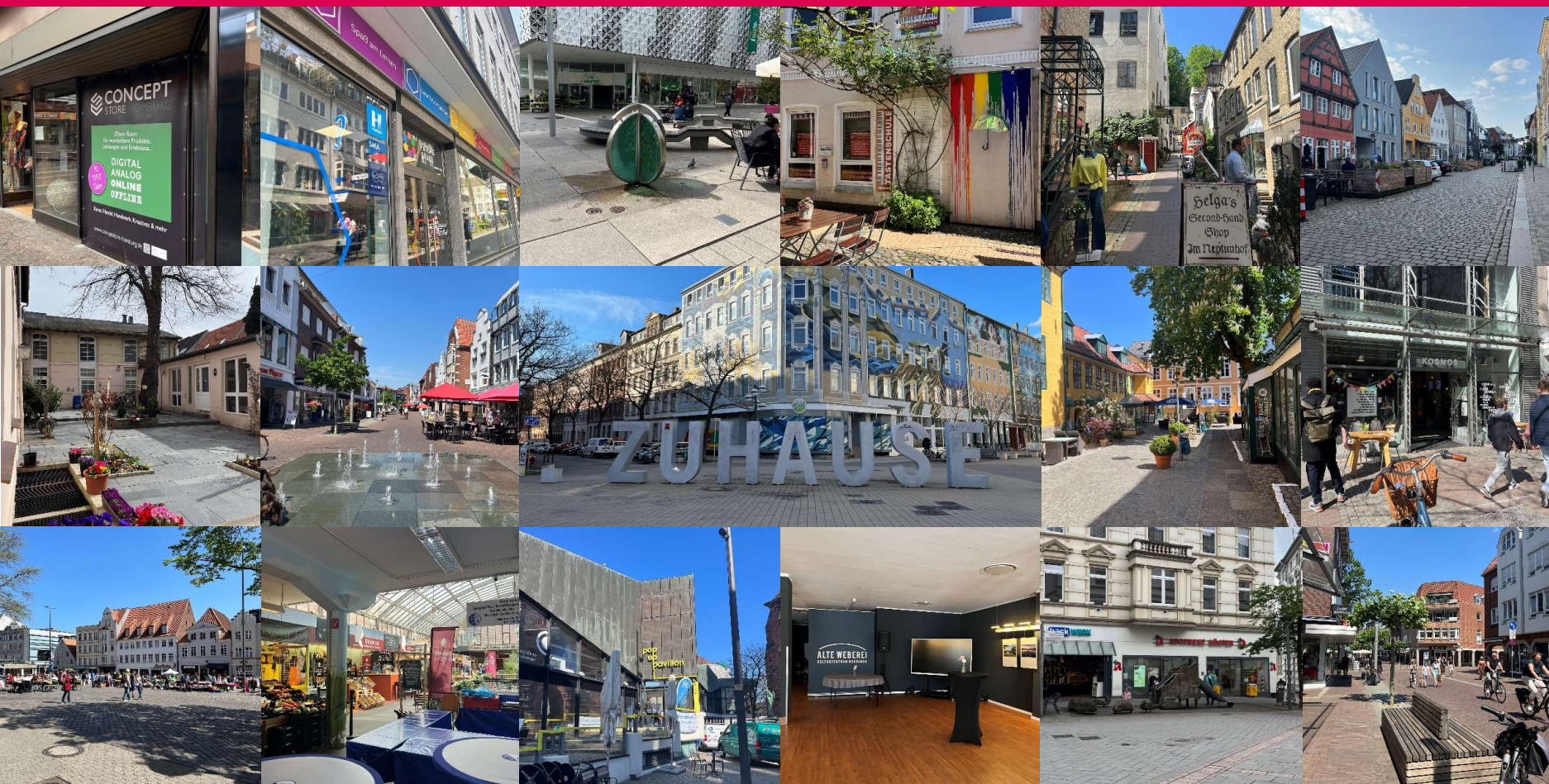
Bedarfsgerechte regionale Mobilitätsangebote

Active citizen participation

Akquise von Fördermitteln für die Stadtentwicklung

In your opinion, how important are the factors mentioned for successful small town development?





*“Strengthening the city centre – preserving community. The city centre is seen as a barometer of municipal vitality and a factor for success – both economically and socially.”*

© BTU

**MANY THANKS!**

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# LITERATUR

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