



 UrbanMetaMapping



## UrbanMetaMapping Semester Talks: Winter Term 2021/22 via zoom, 12.00 - 13.00 (CET)

Registration via: [talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de](mailto:talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de)

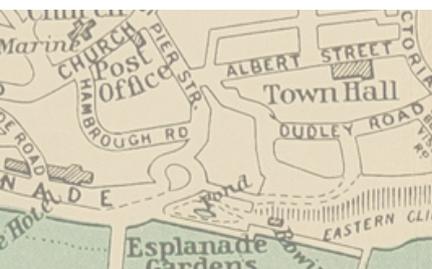
November 17:

Jaroslav Ira, Charles University Prague

### Grand narratives and little places: Deconstructing small towns' imaginaries in the Czech lands and Germany (ca. 1900-1940)

In early twentieth-century, small towns became subject to diverse and often competing narratives. While in general encouraged to follow modernization parallel to big cities, a range of architects, preservationists, and cultural critics started adoring (historical) small towns as a particular form of heritage and viable town, with distinct esthetical, urbanistic and national values. This was followed by efforts to identify specific principles of their spatial development, and prescribe norms for their future planning, while bemoaning recent development as inappropriate and even disastrous. On a broader scale, small towns became increasingly entwined into value-laden dichotomies, such as urban and rural, metropolitan and provincial, or modern and historical, and stereotyped as “slow”, “sleepy/ing”, “traditional”, “backward”, “truly national”, “picturesque”, “healthy”, and so forth.

In this talk, I will look at this issue from local perspective and through the prism of the small town's imaginaries. More specifically, I will discuss the meanings and relations of three spatial components – historical urban space, spaces associated with modernity, and nature – in the synchronic imagery as well as in more narrativized accounts of local developments. Building on diverse media, such as local poetry, estheticized descriptions, and paintings, or local histories, town-related applied graphics and self-promotional texts, I wish to argue that the hegemonic narratives about small towns, formulated typically from outside, concealed more intricate, pluralistic and semantically unstable visions of small-town spaces, in which old and new, rural and urban, or natural and man-made, coexisted in diverse constellations, often reinforcing each other or connoting alternative spaces.



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