Discursive representations of cities in northeast Germany

DIE ERDE

Journal of the
Geographical Society
of Berlin

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Abstract

Discursive representations are some of the most important ascriptions for cities and regions in the neo-liberal competition for inhabitants, tourists and companies. This holds especially true for shrinking regions since they feel the pressure of interregional and international rivalry particularly strongly. These representations are formed through language and actions. By analyzing three German cities – Rostock, Stralsund, Greifswald – this paper explores the role of print media in the production of discursive representations in an urban context. Through the methodologic approach of a lexicometric discourse analysis nearly 2000 articles spanning the years 2009 to 2018 were taken from the Süddeutsche Tageszeitung (SZ) and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), two of Germany's biggest and most read national daily newspapers, and were analyzed. While the media coverage of Rostock and Greifswald seem to attest a strong and dynamic position that seems to neglect the stigmata attached to shrinking cities and regions, Stralsund seems to play a minor role and might really be caught up in a shrinking discourse.

Zusammenfassung

Im neoliberalen Wettbewerb um Einwohner, Touristen und Unternehmen gehören diskursive Repräsentationen zu den wichtigsten Zuschreibungen von Städten und Regionen. Dies trifft besonders auf schrumpfende Regionen zu, welche dem Druck des interregionalen und internationalen Wettbewerbs besonders ausgesetzt sind. Diese Repräsentationen werden dabei durch sprachliche Äußerungen und Handlungen erschaffen. Dieser Beitrag untersucht anhand von drei Städten – Rostock, Stralsund und Greifswald – die Bedeutung der Printmedien bei der Produktion von diskursiven Repräsentationen im urbanen Kontext. Durch den methodischen Ansatz der lexikometrischen Diskursanalyse werden fast 2000 Artikel der Süddeutschen Zeitung (SZ) und der Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) aus den Jahren 2009 bis 2018 analysiert, welche zu den auflagestärksten und meistgelesenen überregionalen deutschen Tageszeitungen gehören. Während die Berichterstattung in den Medien Rostock und Greifswald eine starke und dynamische Stadtentwicklung zuschreibt und sie sich damit von den Stigmata der schrumpfenden Städte und Regionen lösen, nimmt Stralsund eine untergeordnete Rolle ein und scheint tatsächlich eher durch einen Schrumpfungsdiskurs geprägt zu sein.

Keywords   discursive representation, lexicometry, discourse analysis, print media, northeast Germany

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1.   Introduction

There is a saying among students in Greifswald, Germany: "You come to Greifswald with a tear in your eye and you leave Greifswald with a tear in your eye". This saying indicates that people harbor stigmatic ideas and prejudices regarding Greifswald, despite it being a place they may never have been before. Such discursive representations of spaces and places can relate to particular locations, ranging from the smaller scale of a city district to a whole country that explicitly stands for something imagined. These representations can translate our thinking and acting and thus, in turn, also shape the world around us (*Reuber* 2013; *Wiest 2015*). While these socio-cognitive representations might be able to create positive images of cities, they can also lead to negative associations. Individuals, however, are able to change their minds, as exemplified by the saying above, which hints that at the end of their studies in Greifswald, students grow fond of the city.

The origins of these stigmata can be found in the way knowledge and facts are transported by discourse in everyday life. Discourses establish and consolidate discursive representations in society through continuous repetition, which in the end are seldom questioned (*Glasze* 2008). In this paper we investigate how three cities from northeast Germany are represented in print media and which discursive representations derive from this. As urban discourse analysis is an established but still developing field in German based human geography, this paper aims to further solidify the method of the lexicometric discourse analysis. While existing research has looked at discourses surrounding various topics in the framework of urban environments, this work will put the focus on smaller scaled cities (Greifswald, Stralsund and Rostock) in rather rural environments in northeast Germany while they are being embedded in overall shrinking regions. The works of *Foucault* (1971, 1977, 1978, 1981), *Laclau* (1990, 2005) and *Laclau* and *Mouffe* (2015 [1985]), and discourse theory in urban contexts will serve as conceptual background to this research (Section 2). Through the methodologic approach of a lexicometric discourse analysis, this paper analyzes nearly 2000 articles spanning the years 2009 to 2018 (Section 3). These articles were published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), which represent two of the most widely read national daily newspapers in Germany. Results (Section 4) show that the cities of Rostock and Greifswald maintain strong and dynamic positions as university towns and through their economical stances in the region. Stralsund, on the other hand, seems to play a minor role in the analyzed media coverage and might be caught up in a shrinking discourse about the city. The conclusion (Section 5) evaluates these results in the wider context of existing stigma surrounding rural regions of eastern Germany.

2.   Conceptual framework

2.1   The importance of representation

Discursive representations have a major impact on how spaces are perceived (*Müller* 2018). Associations and ideas of what a particular geographical location embodies depend on whether or not someone has physically been in a space (*Brailich* et al. 2010). In some cases, it may be that there are no associations and therefore the space is perceived as unimportant to the individual (*Cherifi* et al. 2014). From an economic perspective, discursive representations play a role as a soft locations factor (*Grabow* 2004). This becomes especially clear in the context of the neo-liberal competition between cities and regions (*Raszkowski* 2012), as many cities and regions in the newer federal states of Germany are confronted by tendencies towards shrinking economies and populations and consequently struggle to maintain their function as places of production and places to live (*Stiller* et al. 2011). While socio-cognitive constructs embed positive representations in people's minds, they can also lead to negative associations (*Koller* 2009) and play a role in the economic and demographic shrinking of these spaces (*Hospers* 2008). There is no singular representation of a city however, at any given time there are multiple representations, formed by different discourses that can collide, enable each other or coexist independently (*Beauregard* 2012).

Discursive representations affect cities in varying ways. Administrations consider them while working out development strategies, manufactures and companies choose production locations based on representations (*Liouris* and *Deffner* 2005) and inhabitants reflect the representations to either identify or distance themselves from the city or region (*Marchart* 1999). To counter negative discursive representations, city administrations and municipal policies have taken measures such as city marketing to promote positive representations (*Kavaratzis* and *Ashworth* 2005).

Since the late 1980s, many iterations of the battle between cities can be observed throughout societies. Yearly publications on which city is the strongest economically, which is the most environmentally friendly, which has the highest living quality for its residents or which city has the highest crime rate are released in many parts of the world (*Besecke* and *Herkommer* 2007) and contribute, both negatively and positively, to the discursive representations surrounding particular cities. This can lead to city administrations focusing their workforce to optimize their participation in this intercity competition and neglect other tasks at the risk of getting no governmental aid or other rewards at all (*Klüter* 2012).

Shrinking regions, atrophying villages and smaller scale cities that are losing population are a topic that has been discussed in a global context as large cities and urban lifestyles increase in popularity (*Humer* 2018). This is a global phenomenon that has been investigated for several decades, but has more recently been brought into an international context (*Döring* et al. 2020). In the past, European regions – in particular Germany's newer federal states – were often used as case studies of shrinking regions (e.g. *Bontje* 2004; *Franz* 2004; *Altrock* 2008; *Gribat* 2010). More recently, however, the debate has expanded around the globe by cross-referencing the problems and reasons for shrinking regions and cities internationally (*Zingale* and *Riemand* 2013). Existing studies have looked at shrinking cities predominantly from planning, economic or political perspectives (*Döringer* et al. 2020). Thus, the association between discourse (analysis) and the depopulation of spaces has been somewhat neglected in the academic debate surrounding the shrinkage phenomenon (*Meyer* et al. 2016). The project 'Discourse and practice in shrinking regions' (2013 to 2017) looked at discourse and stigmata in Germany's eastern federal states, analyzing the feedback between regional and urban development and (negative) discursive representations. This study identified media as playing a crucial role in the construction of discursive representations (*Miggelbrink* and *Meyer* 2015). Given that universities hold a special position in city and regional development strategies, they may be able to act as growth engines in shrinking regions and thus may lead to the formation of individual growth islands around university cities (*Kujath* 2015). Consequently, the role that institutions of higher education play in the role of shrinking regions represents one of the key focuses of this study.

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and in particular the municipality of Vorpommern-Greifswald, seem to be caught up in a public discourse that characterize the region as an aging place that is shrinking in population and as a result may not be perceived to be economically competitive by the public eye (*Meiritz* 2016). This, in turn, has consequences on several administrative levels. Shortenings of public budgets or funds and a general alignment of the regional development strategies towards the emptying of spaces seem to dominate the public debate (*Klüter* 2018). Viewed through the lens of constructivistic social science, this assumed knowledge trickles into the public discourse about the northeast and its cities and materializes, serving as a self-fulfilling prophecy that exerts power over these spaces. Why move to a space that is not livable and economically strong? Why stay and work there if the public discourse suggests that there are places with a promise of better life? Why put effort and public money into a shrinking place at all? This paper analyzes the media coverage of three cities in the German federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania to investigate the portrayal of these shrinking regions and how the discourse perpetuated through the media might impact these cities position in the neo-liberal competition between spatial units.

2.2 Discourse in the context of urban environments

Two methodological branches have emerged in the theory surrounding urban discourse analysis. The first has been derived from a *Marxist* standpoint with a clear class-oriented thinking. This branch analyzes language structures that are knowingly employed by actors in discourse on how to speak, think and act so as to direct public opinion and achieve certain economic and political goals in the urban environment (*Angermüller* 2018). This understanding of discourse in an urban context was further developed to center on how actors interact with each other through discourses, for example when actors form urban alliances (*Lees* 2004). The second branch has arisen from *Foucault's* concept on representation. In his view, discourse is a collection of statements made regarding a certain topic that is underlying all things. *Marx's* strict class and actor centered theory is rejected in favor of a wider field of discourses in social aspects, as *Foucault* did with the prison in "Discipline and Punish" (*Foucault* 2004 [1976]; *Foucault* 1981). This implies that statements follow specific social patterns and practices, which in turn produce meaning and lead to

identities and objects being constructed unintentionally through language (*Lees* 2004). This accumulated knowledge about people, objects or spaces translates into public opinion through repetition, and thus establishes itself (*Glasze* 2008). This concept is picked up by *Laclau* and *Mouffe* (2015 [1985]) but altered in a way that allows them to look at discourse as a product that not only constitutes speech and writing, but also contains a material, non-verbal component as well. While *Laclau* and *Mouffe* come from a class-oriented *Marxist* body of thought, their concept of discourse is based on *Foucault*, while combining it with the *Gramcian* concept of political hegemony *(Glasze* and *Mattissek* 2009). The element of repetition implies that discourses are instable over time and thus only can be fixated temporarily. Knowledge that once constituted a fact might change over time or even exist parallel to contrary knowledge and facts and, therefore, might reflect different representations (*Moebius* 2003). Having said this, discourses are volatile and if one representation gets less attention and repetition, its meaning may fade, making room for an altered or completely new representation (*Nonhoff* 2007). In this framework a lexicometric discourse analysis can be used to determine the attributes that have been assigned to the cities studied in the current research using newspaper articles that report about certain topics. *Foucault* and *Laclau* and *Moffe*'s theoretical concepts in conjunction with the instrument of lexicometric discourse analysis allow the investigation of the underlying discursive patterns on how a space is represented.

Urban spaces have always been the arena for political and democratic confrontations (*Müller* and *Sträter* 2011). Manifold positions continuously negotiate in ever-changing alliances or oppositions over knowledge-power relations, and their stances in the complex interweaving of urban spaces (*Glasze* and *Mattissek* 2009). One aspect of these power struggles manifests in discursive representations (*Dryzek* and *Niemeyer* 2008). Even though poststructuralist concepts and discourse analysis were introduced to human geography as early as the 1980s (*Anderson* 2019; *Mattissek* and *Glasze* 2014; *Cosgrove* and *Jackson* 1987), *Beauregard* (2012) points out that so far, studies have concentrated primarily on objective circumstances rather than representations. According to *Lees* (2004), urban discourse and its analyses grew in popularity in the early 2000s, especially in the field of urban politics and governance theory. While discourse theory has been present in Anglophonic human

geographies for several decades, German based social sciences lagged behind until the late 1990s (*Mattissek* and *Glasze* 2014). Since this time, German discourse research with spatial contexts has developed in different, specialized directions, with some focusing characteristics of action theoretical approaches and others concentrating on difference-theoretical, language-based studies (*Weber* 2019). Urban geography and discourse research has come together occasionally through different works. For example, *Mattissek* (2008) looked at discursive representation of the three German major cities Cologne, Frankfurt on the Main and Leipzig, while *Weber* (2013) compiled corpora out of interview texts and governmental aid documentation to demonstrate cultural differentiation in urban environments in France and Germany. *Hufner* and *Mossig* (2014) investigated location requirements of German start-ups and analyzed corpora consisting of entries from specific start-up blogs. *Breitung* and *Hopfinger* (2015) took articles from print media to understand how urban identity is constructed in a migratory context.

3. Case study areas and method

3.1 Case study areas

The selected cities – Greifswald, Rostock, Stralsund – belonged to the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) while Germany was divided. Thus, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is one of the new federal states, which is located in Germany's northeast. Each city has access to the Baltic Sea and has been a member of the Hanseatic League at one point. This maritime heritage is still present today in the architecture of all three cities, with Stralsund's old town listed as one of UNESCOs world heritage sites (*UNESCO* 2015). The cities are hosts to higher educational institutions with the universities in Rostock and Greifswald being traditional universities, while the university in Stralsund is a University of Applied Sciences.

Rostock is the largest city. Its urban area spreads over 181.4 km² and has a population of 208,886 (*Statistisches Amt Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* 2019). It is divided into 31 districts and has a regional airport in its south with mostly short-haul flights to destinations such as Turkey, Greece and Austria, as well as domestic flights. Its economy relies heavily on fish processing, tourism with a focus on cruises, and the shipyard industry. The largest employer is the city's university.

Stralsund lies in direct connection to the popular holiday destination of the isle Rügen. This led to the development of a heavy tourism focused economy, with museums, accommodation and the public aquarium and educational facility Ozeaneum that opened in 2009. Traditionally, Stralsund also had a strong reliance on its shipyard industry. Its 59,421 inhabitants live on an area of 54.07 km² and eight districts. Greifswald is in close proximity to the island of Usedom (*Fig. 1*), another popular travel destination. Additionally, it is the eastmost of the three cities and is located closely to Poland. Similarly to Stralsund, Greifswald focuses on the tourism and shipyard industry, although the university hospital is the largest employer in the city. In Greifswald, 59,382 inhabitants live in an area of 50.5 km².

As a district reform of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania took place in 2011, the federal state shrank down from 37 to 18 territorial units. As a result, the city's administration and some regional experts consider Greifswald as being caught up in a shrinking discourse. Even though Greifswald has been gaining population, the newly gained surrounding rural areas have been losing more population than the city could compensate for in the statistics. Due to the federal statistics not differentiating between the city and its surrounding areas, the district of Vorpommern-Greifswald has a negative population balance. Therefore, administra-

tions and politics fear that Greifswald is being associated with a decline in population even though it has been growing yearly. It is feared that this is leading to companies failing to consider Greifswald for their business locations or potential incomers excluding the city as viable locations for their new hometown (*Klüter* 2018).

3.2   Method

Urban spaces are associated with different discursive representations that vary depending on the position of the speaker. One such representation is created through the print media's view on spaces that are displayed in news coverage (*Reuber* and *Schlottmann* 2015; *Avraham* 2000). Even in the 21st century and facing competition through online news and social media, print media still plays an important role in the daily news distribution, and thus has a large impact on the creation of discursive representations (*Reuber* and *Schlottmann* 2015).

For this analysis, two German newspapers were chosen by the criteria of being published nationwide and belonging to the newspapers with the highest circulation volume in Germany (*Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung und Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e.V.* 2019). Respectively, the SZ and the FAZ where chosen,

Fig. 1   Location of Rostock, Stralsund and Greifswald. Source: map by Jörg Hartleib, data by Natural Earth (2020)

as they not only belong to the most sold German daily newspapers, but also are based in south-western Germany and may provide a more federal view on the studied cities. A timespan of ten years, ranging from 2009 to 2018 has been chosen as it covers more recent developments in the cities as well as a more mid-term perspective. The articles were selected by looking at the newspaper archives by the names of the cities and then were chosen for the corpora if the articles referred either to the city itself (e.g. economy or social happenings) or to an institution or company that stands in direct relation to the city by being spatially tied to it and considered an important part of the city (e.g. the universities of each city). The corpora for the lexicomentric discourse analysis consist of 1943 articles overall (*Table 1*), empirically investigated by using the program WordSmith 7.

Table 1 Overview of articles per newspaper in the different corpora. Source: own elaboration

Greifswald	SZ	86
	FAZ	684
Rostock	SZ	269
	FAZ	713
Stralsund	SZ	46
	FAZ	145
Σ	**SZ**	**401**
	FAZ	**1542**

For our purpose, important textual elements were translated from German to English with utmost care not to lose contextual meanings of words. To ensure this, some changings of syntax were necessary, especially in direct quotations of newspaper articles. Nevertheless, the German original quotations are given in the footnotes for reference. The methodological procedure is based on the concepts of *Foucault* (1971, 1977, 1978, 1981) and his further developed ideas by *Laclau* and *Mouffe* (2015 [1985]).

The explorative method of corpus driven lexicometry focuses on general linguistic structures in texts (*Mattissek* 2008), specifically quantitative relations between elements such as frequencies in which certain words emerge, or a specific pattern in groups of words that appear together. Frequency analysis counts the absolute or relative frequency of textual elements, while concordance analysis investigates the context in which certain textual elements occur by counting a specific number of words before and after a searchword (*Dzudzek* et al. 2011). The relative

closeness of words is described by a mutual information score (MI-Score), with higher values suggesting a stronger relationship between the words. The program WordSmith 7 additionally offers the option to conduct a keyword analysis. This tool allows the user to compare a wordlist that is compiled from one corpus or several corpora with a reference wordlist. The results of this analysis show which words are outstanding in their frequency when compared to the reference wordlist. This process identifies words with a high degree of explanation that are part of the discursive representation of a space. The level of this degree of explanation is quantified by the keyness-value of a word, which is calculated by WordSmith 7 via a chi-square test with Yates correction for a 2 X 2 table and Ted Dunning's Log Likelihood test (*Scott* 2010a). Higher keyness-values indicate that a word has a high degree of explanation within the examined textual documents. Therefore, keywords are defined as words that occur with high keyness-values in the context of the examined corpus. They do not have to be words that occur particularly frequently in the texts, but can be used to describe the contents of texts and thus to describe the cities examined (*Scott* 2010b). A pre-compiled stopword list was chosen for the analysis with a sum of 1853 stopwords, containing mostly conjunctions, numerals and articles (*Götze* and *Geyer* 2016).

While this method is able to give insight on how a city is discursively represented and how these representations may have changed over time, a criticism of the methodical approach of lexicometric discourse analysis is that it only looks at words that appear in close proximity to one another, but will not allow to contextualize the results within a text or in an overarching framing (*Mattissek* 2008). To counter this, findings need to be encoded for an interpretative level of the analysis. This goes hand in hand with investigating textual parts on a microscale.

Direct citations were taken from a co-occurrence analysis of the newspaper articles if they could be regarded as 'typical' for the respective city due to the frequency of the topics. This step helps to understand how specific elements are representative for the overall representation and what these representations consist off (*Dzudzek* et al. 2011). For this purpose, the words in the results of the micro analysis were put in thematic and overarching categories that show the discursive fields in which the words mostly emerged.

4. Results

4.1 Shared corpora analysis

Taking into account 30 corpora from the SZ for each of the three cities in all years from 2009 to 2018 and comparing this to a corpus that consists of every article in the SZ in the same timespan that contains the word city, the word with the highest keyness is *Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania* (419.31), as it is often used to give readers a spatial reference on where the cities lie. The same principle applies with *Baltic Sea* (307.09) and *East-Germany* (25.89). The geographic location of the three cities also plays an important role not only for spatial perspective, but also because in the German context it is often used as a broader term to refer to the newer federal states that were included into the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990. As such, the usage of these terms is controversial. Although they can be used as neutral location indicators, they have an attached stigma in the German language, implying the cliché of the economically weak, uneducated and xenophobic parts of Germany (*Müller* 2016). Terms like *neo-nazis* (167.69), *Pegida* (islamophobic German citizen's movement) (47.37), or *AFD* (*Alternative für Deutschland*; a radical right-wing German political party) (64.78) seem to be overrepresented in articles about the three cities compared to the reference corpora. This phenomenon was also present in some of the articles, repeating and thus solidifying the popular opinion that shapes how civilians in other parts of Germany think about the newer federal states.

> East-Germany, with the exception of Berlin, is mostly free of foreigners. The biggest success of neo-nazis in Germany is not their presence in state parliaments, but this fact: for migrants, East-Germany is considered a no-go area. State and politics have not changed this climate over the last two decades. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2012a)[1]

> According to Iris Gleicke, the representative for the needs of the new German states, right-wing extremism is 'a very concerning threat for the civil and economic development of East-Germany'. [...] Nearly half of all acts of violence happened in East-Germany, while only one-fifth of Germanys inhabitants live there. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2016a) [2]

But there are also articles which neglect the existing stigmata of Germany's newer federal states and in particular Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania:

> The economic distance between the sparsely populated northeast of Germany and the boom regions in the south of the republic is still huge, but the race to catch up has gained momentum. Following the industrial collapse after the reunification of Germany the numbers of employees in industry and manufacturing steadily rose again. The holiday region at the Baltic sea reports visitor records of 30.5 million overnight stays that are expected for this year. Agriculture is often more competitive against the smaller farms in the West due to the vast availability of acreage. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2016b)[3]

The aforementioned article also bolsters efforts made by Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania to promote itself as the fastest growing destination in Germany. Currently, tourism is an important pillar of the region's economic strategy on both the federal state level and trickles down to the municipal level through development plans and strategies (*Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Gesundheit Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* 2018). This staging is further facilitated through the media, which reinforces the concept of the growing tourism industry, and thus creates the discursive representation of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and the three cities, as a maritime holiday destination. For example, one headline even states:

> Rügen instead of Tuscany. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has evolved into a tourism magnet [...]. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2015a)[4]

Interestingly the word *tourism* and its lemma only appear 67 times throughout the shared corpora and no tourism-related term was marked as a keyword by the shared corpora analysis.

Another important discursive representation for the northeast seems to revolve around *shipyards* (145.59) and the shipbuilding industry. This may be due to the chosen time span for the articles, which fell in line with a profound structural change in the shipyard industry. When looking at *insolvency* (48.34) with a co-occurrence analysis it shows that it is mostly used in the context of closing or endangered shipyards:

The foreseeable insolvency of the P+S shipyards shocks the federal state [Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania] to its core. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2012a)[5]

Other terms that occur throughout the shared corpus are related to higher education. This reflects the importance of the local universities, especially in Greifswald and Rostock. In the shared corpus, the words *researcher* (153.71) and *scientist* (139.68) are mentioned in articles regarding specific research results. Universities in Greifswald and Rostock appear as knowledge hubs, creating strong discursive representations of both cities as being spaces of science and innovation, not just in their respective regions but throughout Germany. Additionally, Greifswald and Rostock are referred to as university towns:

The prospering university town Greifswald is not far away [from the village Groß Kiesow]. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2015b)[6]

Wait lists for industrial apartment blocks – this is rare in [Germany's] eastern federal states, especially in smaller towns. In the university town Greifswald however, it is fairly typical. It lies in the appealing location in Western Pomerania between the islands of Rügen and Usedom. The university has had strong growth since the reunification of Germany, with its student numbers more than tripling since 1993. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2012b)[7]

In stark opposition to this the university of applied sciences in Stralsund is only referred to seven times throughout the collective corpora. This is surprising given that the university promotes itself as the "innovative engine of the region" (*Hochschule Stralsund* 2020: n. pag.).

The last topic that seems to be representative for northeastern Germany and the three cities that were investigated stems from the word *theater* (63.27). This is because for some time there were considerations for a fusion of different theaters in smaller town of Western-Pomerania. These plans were accompanied by some controversy and the fusion itself was put on hold in 2017.

4.2 Rostock

Looking at the collocation and keyword analysis for corpora of Rostock it is clear that the discursive representation of the city and soccer are inseparably intertwined. (*FC*) *Hansa* (Rostock) (*Fig. 2* and *Fig. 3*), which is the biggest soccer club in the city, is the most important keyword with a keyness-factor of 640.31. Searching for the term through the individual corpora for each year a connection between the ranking of the FC Hansa Rostock in the Fußball Bundesliga (German national league) and the medial occurrence of the term in both newspapers can be observed. The corpora mostly consist of the time when the FC Hansa Rostock was placed in the second or third tier of the national league, but even here distinctions are recognizable. The term had 102 entries coinciding with the 2009/10 season during which the club was in the second tier of the national league, while there were only 13 entries in the 2015/16 season when the club was ranked in the third tier of the national league. Nevertheless, soccer is an important factor in the creation of discursive representation of spaces (*Van den Berg* et al. 2016). The city's name translates through the media daily via the coverage of sport events and thus creates a direct linkage between the club and the city in the broad population. This can also lead to negative press due to some of the articles emphasizing the connection between aggressive soccer fans, violent conflicts and police operations.

Riots between rivaling fans of the third league clubs FC Hansa Rostock and Halleschen FC could only be prevented by the police through a massive presence at the game. According to the Rostock police, violent fans of both clubs 'obviously and purposefully sought direct confrontation' at this high risk game. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2012c)[8]

The fight against the untameables. Violent fans threaten the existence of Hansa Rostock. Home games burden the whole city. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2011)[9]

This affects the perception of the club, but also forms stigmata against the city and its population. Other soccer related terms also inhabit high ranks in the keyword list, with *fans* (keyness of 262.16), *Bundesliga*, *game*, *trainer*, *team*, *soccer* or *stadium* being the most common.

Fig. 2   Collocation-analysis for the term 'Rostock' in the print media Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between the years 2009 and 2018. The larger the word is displayed, the more often it occurs relatively. Source: own elaboration

Fig. 3   Keyword-analysis for the corpus of Rostock in comparison to the corpora of Stralsund and Greifswald with articles from the print media Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between the years 2009 and 2018. The larger the word is displayed, the more often it occurs relatively. Source: own elaboration

Another important aspect is the economic base of the city of Rostock. Looking at collocations the *Wadan-Werften* (Wadan-shipyards), the words *shipyards* and *harbor* are ranked highly, emphasizing the focus on the maritime industry. Additional economically oriented terms are *Nordex* (manufacturer of wind power plants) and *Airport*. The *AIDA* company (ship cruise company based in Rostock) seems to hold a special position with a keyness of 229.31. This underpins its importance as one of Rostock's largest employers. The *university* and the *Max-Planck Institute for Demographic Research* establish the discursive representation of Rostock as a center of science and innovation.

> No doubt, Rostock has a future. The city is growing. The population rose by more than 6,000 to approximately 204,000 inhabitants between the years 2006 and 2011. The economy – looking at the recovering Neptun shipyard or the crane builder Liebherr in the harbor – has also picked up over the last years. Tourism too. Rostock's university is getting more attractive for students of the old federal states. Construction sites are everywhere. The large industrial apartment block districts at the edges of the town have been mostly modernized. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2013)[10]

A problematic aspect of the discursive representation shows up in articles about xenophobia and racism. Particularly in the years after 2015 and during the European migrant crisis, articles were debating the state of racism in Germany and specifically in the new federal states. This is due to the far *right wing* political parties being particularly strong in East Germany and a general stigma of these states as being more xenophobic than other parts of Germany (*Müller* 2016). When these tendencies started to rise in Germany, the case of *Rostock-Lichtenhagen* (keyness of 202.62) emerged in many articles as a warning example on how xenophobia can lead to violent outbreaks against foreigners, refugees or people of different beliefs. In the summer of 1992, *riots* arose against a dormitory in which Vietnamese foreign workers were housed. The riots culminated in violent acts against the police and the burning of the building. Since then, the history of Rostock-Lichtenhagen is often used in the context of violence against *foreigners* in Germany. As a similar event happened in *Hoyerswerda*, a city in Saxony, it is ranked very high in the collocation analysis for Rostock.

4.3   Greifswald

Greifswald is well known for its university and its historical old town. This is reflected in the corpora of both newspapers, with terms like *hanseatic league* (keyness of 128.36) or *university* (keyness of 125.12) (*Fig. 4*) populating the most common terms in the articles with a direct spatial relation with the city. The discursive representation of Greifswald as a university town is further established through the terms *students*, *scientist*(*s*), *Wendelstein 7-X*, *Max-Planck Institute for Plasma Physics* or the isolated island of *Riems* where reseach on *viruses* and *pathogens* is done. The research in plasma appears to be an important topic, as the term *plasma* co-occurs in the corpora in the context of the Max-Planck institute. The university itself was the topic of articles from 2017 onwards, as the decision was made to rename it from *Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University* (*Fig. 5*) Greifswald to University Greifswald, as *Ernst-Moritz Arndt* was a German writer with some anti-Semitic and Francophobic opinions. This sparked numerous debates throughout the city and Germany wide, not only on Ernst-Moritz Arndt as a person, but also around tradition and xenophobia more broadly. Interestingly, the words *Nord-Stream*, *gas*, *Russia*, *Russian* and *pipeline* are strongly connected to Greifswald as well. Since the gas pipelines Nord Stream 1 and 2 run from *Wyborg* in Russia to *Lubmin* in Germany, Greifswald is often used in place of Lubmin, as it is the closest major settlement.

Besides Rostock, Greifwald is the only city in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, that is gaining population. This is documented by articles regarding its overall development.

> Boom at the [Greifswald] Bay. No vacancies in the industrialized apartment blocks. Greifswald in Western Pomerania is growing. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2012b)[11]

On the other hand, there are rarely articles published concerning Greifswald's economy. Those that do concentrate on the sailing- and motor yacht manufacturer *HanseYachts AG*, as it is a globally leading company in its market segment. The term *Bavaria* comes up in the keyword analysis, as it is the name of Germany's largest sailing- and motorboat company and a direct competitor to HanseYachts. All analysis reveals no severe evidence, that Greifswald is connected with the feared shrinking discourse in the print media. Nevertheless, there are mostly neutral depictions of the migratory behavior in Greifswald.

Fig. 4 Keyword-analysis for the corpus of Greifswald in comparison to the corpora of Stralsund and Rostock with articles from the print media Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between the years 2009 and 2018. The larger the word is displayed, the more often it occurs relatively. Source: own elaboration

Fig. 5 Collocation-analysis for the term 'Greifswald' in the print media Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between the years 2009 and 2018. The larger the word is displayed, the more often it occurs relatively. Source: own elaboration

Like the regions surrounding the cities, the suburban neighborhoods are developing splendidly. Especially because young families with a higher income are settling down there. The rural areas are less fortunate [...]. Women in particular are migrating more frequently than men. This trend has been observed for several years now. Without women there are no births. This results, so to say, in a double emigration. As for university cities, they attempt to keep young students in the city or at least the state after they graduate. But most young people return to where they came from. New students replace them. This leads to migratory movements that do not matter that much. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2018)[12]

4.4 Stralsund

For Stralsund, the economy seems to play the most important role for the coverage on the city. A large proportion of the articles focus on the *shipyards* (keyness of 619.55) (*Fig. 6*) of the city, closely related to the word *shipping company* (*Fig. 7*). As in the general analysis for all 30 corpora of the SZ, this is due to the shipyard business declining and *insolvencies* of some of the shipyards. Many of these closing shipyards had their home base *location* in Stralsund.

The crisis has derailed the long booming shipyard industry. Slumps in world trading have caused cargo prices to fall, with shipping companies reporting high losses and shipyards like those here in Stralsund are suffering from the cancellations. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2010)[13]

Once again, shipyards in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania are facing insolvencies. After months of indecision regarding the rescue of the P+S Werften in Stralsund and Wolgast, the state government decided to stop the financial aid. Nearly 2,000 jobs are in danger, because shipyards are running out of money. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2012b)[14]

The lack of construction *orders* is also documented in the corpora, with the word and its lemma and the word *job* and its lemma appearing predominantly in articles documenting the situation of *bankrupt* shipyards in Stralsund. In analogy to the shared corpora analysis there is nearly no coverage of touristic aspects of the city. The *Ozeaneum* and the *Deutsches Meeresmuseum,* two major tourist attractions, constitute large parts of a discursive representation that revolves around tourism centered topics. This is further enhanced through terms like *Baltic Sea*, *hanseatic city* or *world heritage site*, interestingly without the term UNESCO however.
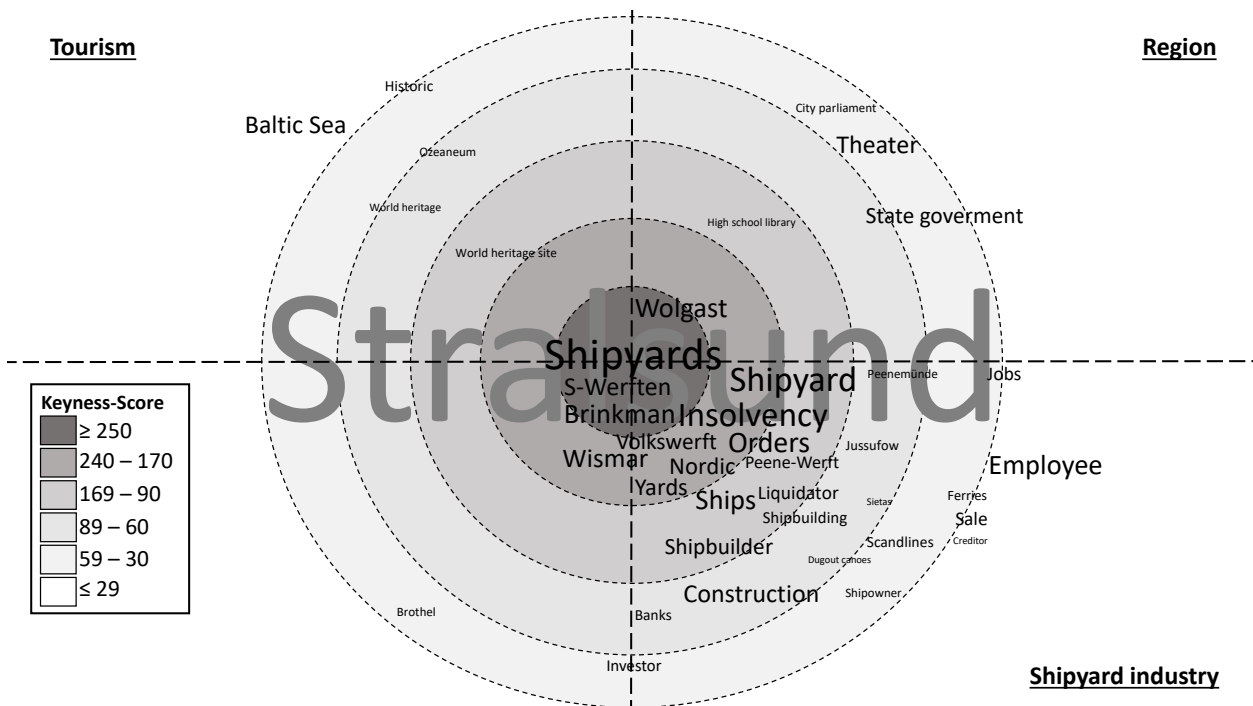

Fig. 6   Keyword-analysis for the corpus of Stralsund in comparison to the corpora of Greifswald and Rostock with articles from the print media Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between the years 2009 and 2018. The larger the word is displayed, the more often it occurs relatively. Source: own elaboration
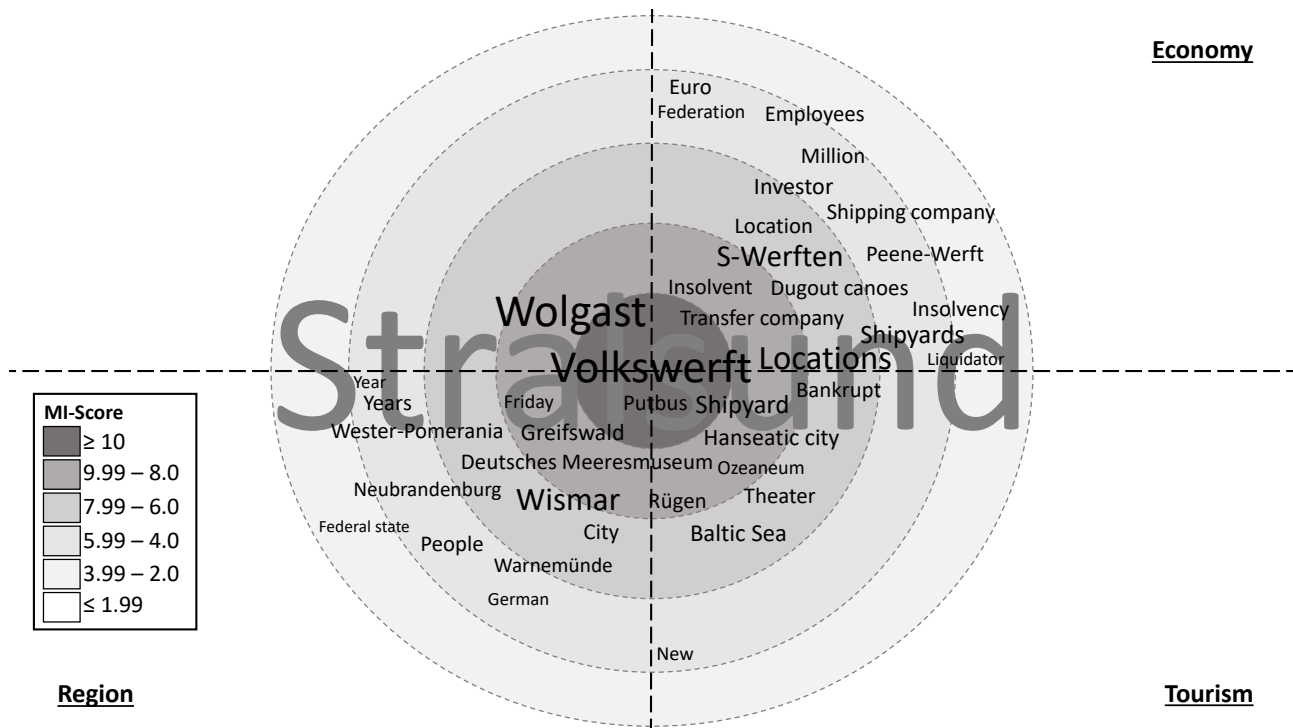
Fig. 7   Collocation-analysis for the term 'Stralsund' in the print media Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between the years 2009 and 2018. The larger the word is displayed, the more often it occurs relatively. Source: own elaboration

5.   Conclusions

Discursive representations play a crucial role for cities and regions by influencing the neo-liberal competition for inhabitants, tourists and companies. These representations are shaped by different verbal and non-verbal symbols that originate from different mediums, with print media being one. By analyzing three German cities – Rostock, Stralsund, Greifswald – this paper explores the discursive representations surrounding the three cities and how these representations serve to depict these spaces. Through a lexicometric discourse analysis nearly 2000 articles were analyzed from two of Germany's most read newspapers spanning the years 2009 to 2018.

Results illustrate media coverage for all three cities. As shipbuilding has historically been tied to northeastern Germany, it occurs in the shared corpora for all cities. In the case of Stralsund, it was a particularly dominant topic as, the insolvency of different shipyards impacted the city substantially. The city of Rostock was characterized by representations related to soccer, the university and some specific companies, but also by representations of violence at soccer

games or against foreigners in the case of the Rostock-Lichtenhagen pogroms. The discourse surrounding Greifswald is mostly associated with the university and research institutes such as the Max-Planck Institute for Plasma Physics. Rostock and Greifswald are often described as livable and well developing places, even though the federal state as a whole is shrinking. Considering the significance of representations of local institutions of higher education in the analyzed corpora, the results further underline the importance of universities as growth engines in cities and regions. The articles about Stralsund are scarce. Most articles revolve around bankruptcy in shipyard businesses and the once-planned downsizing of the theaters in Western Pomerania. This might create rather negative associations and builds discursive representations of Stralsund as a shrinking city with a declining economy. In line with the theories of *Foucault* (1971, 1977, 1978, 1981), *Laclau* (1990, 2005) and *Laclau* and *Mouffe* (2015 [1985]), these discourses might engender effects on the material plane. City administrations are considering how to handle existing discursive representations and different scaled policies might be influenced in crucial decision making, such as the allocation of funding and subsidies. Furthermore, it is

important to keep in mind that these discursive representations are just some among many. Other media might depict different discursive representations, and cities are constantly working on how they want to represent themselves via city marketing and management approaches. How they handle representations that are ascribed to them may differ from case to case. This paper demonstrates that lexicometric discourse analysis can be effectively used to elucidate and compare discursive representations surrounding cities. This presents an interesting field to investigate further, as it will allow us to better develop an understanding of how discursive representations are created and how they shape cities, regions and spaces.

Notes

[1] "Ostdeutschland, Berlin ausgenommen, ist weitgehend ausländerfrei. Der größte Erfolg der Neonazis in Deutschland ist nicht ihre Präsenz in Landesparlamenten, sondern dieses Faktum: Unter den Migranten gilt Ostdeutschland als No-go-Area. Staat und Politik haben es in zwei Jahrzehnten nicht geschafft, das Klima zu wenden."

[2] "Laut der ‚Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für die Belange der neuen Bundesländer', Iris Gleicke, stellt der Rechtsextremismus sogar eine ‚sehr ernstzunehmende Bedrohung für die gesellschaftliche, aber auch für die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Ostdeutschlands' dar. [...] Fast die Hälfte der Gewalttaten geschah in Ostdeutschland – allerdings lebt dort nur knapp ein Fünftel der deutschen Bevölkerung."

[3] "Der wirtschaftliche Abstand zwischen dem dünnbesiedelten Land im Nordosten Deutschlands zu den Boomregionen im Süden der Republik ist zwar noch riesig, doch die Aufholjagd hat spürbar Fahrt gewonnen. Nach dem Zusammenbruch der Industrie nach der Wende steigt die Zahl der Arbeitsplätze in Industrie und verarbeitendem Gewerbe wieder stetig. Die Urlaubsregionen an der Ostsee melden Besucherrekorde. 30,5 Millionen Übernachtungen werden in diesem Jahr erwartet. Die Landwirtschaft ist wegen ihrer großen Flächen oft wettbewerbsfähiger als viele Höfe im Westen."

[4] "Rügen statt Toskana. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern hat sich zum Touristenmagnet entwickelt [...]."

[5] "Die absehbare Insolvenz der P+S Werften erschüttert das Land [Mecklenburg-Vorpommern] in seinem Kern."

[6] "Die aufblühende Universitätsstadt Greifswald liegt nicht weit entfernt [von dem Dorf Groß-Kiesow]."

[7] "Wartelisten für Plattenbauten – das ist selten in den östlichen Bundesländern, vor allem in kleineren Städten. Ganz typisch ist es dagegen für die Universitätsstadt Greifswald. Sie liegt in Vorpommern in reizvoller Lage, zwischen den Inseln Rügen und Usedom. Die Universität ist seit der Wende kräftig gewachsen, die Studentenzahlen haben sich seit 1993 mehr als verdreifacht."

[8] "Nur mit einem massiven Aufgebot hat die Polizei im Umfeld des Spiels zwischen Hansa Rostock und dem Halleschen FC in der dritten Liga Ausschreitungen verhindert. Nach Angaben der Polizeiinspektion Rostock haben bei der als Risikospiel eingestuften Begegnung gewaltbereite Anhänger beider Vereine ‚zielgerichtet und offensichtlich abgesprochen immer wieder die direkte Konfrontation gesucht'."

[9] "Der Kampf gegen die Unzähmbaren. Gewaltbereite Fans bedrohen die Existenz von Hansa Rostock. Heimspiele werden zu einer Belastung für die ganze Stadt."

[10] "Keine Frage, Rostock hat Zukunft, die Stadt ist Wachstumsregion. Zwischen 2006 und 2011 stieg ihre Einwohnerzahl um mehr als 6000 auf etwa 204 000 Einwohner an. Auch die Wirtschaft – siehe die sich erholende Neptunwerft oder den im Hafen angesiedelten Kranbauer Liebherr – zieht seit einigen Jahren wieder an. Der Tourismus sowieso. Rostocks Universität wird für Studenten aus den alten Bundesländern immer attraktiver. Überall wird gebaut. Die großen Plattenbau-Viertel am Rande der Stadt sind weitgehend modernisiert."

[11] "Boom am Bodden. Kein Leerstand in der Platte. Greifswald in Vorpommern ist auf Wachstumskurs."

[12] "Auch die Regionen um diese Städte herum, die suburbanen Wohngebiete, entwickeln sich prächtig. Vor allem weil junge Familien mit gutem Einkommen sich hier ansiedeln. Weniger gut sieht es in den ländlichen Weiten abseits aller Zentren aus. [...]. Es sind dabei noch immer mehr Frauen als Männer, die weggehen. Auch das lässt sich seit vielen Jahren schon beobachten. Ohne die Frauen aber auch keine Geburten. Das ist dann sozusagen eine doppelte Abwanderung. Was die Universitätsstädte betrifft, so versuchen sie, die jungen Leute auch nach dem Studium in der Stadt oder wenigstens im Land zu halten. Die meisten jungen Leute kehren aber dorthin zurück, woher sie kamen. Neue ersetzen sie, wodurch die Wanderungsbewegung insgesamt nicht so sehr ins Gewicht fällt."

[13] "Die Krise hat die lange boomende Schifffahrt vom Kurs abgebracht. Einbrüche im Welthandel ließen die Frachtpreise fallen, Reedereien fahren hohe Verluste ein, und Werften wie hier in Stralsund leiden unter Stornierungen."

[14] "Erneut stehen Werften in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern vor dem Aus. Nach monatelangem Hin und Her bei der Rettung für die P+S-Werften in Stralsund und Wolgast stoppt die Landesregierung nun ihre Hilfen. Knapp 2000 Jobs sind damit in Gefahr, denn den Werften geht das Geld aus."

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