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Enhancing societal cohesion by civil society assuming on-site responsibility [Zivilgesellschaftliche Verantwortungsübernahme für gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt vor Ort]

Interview-Set

Creator (PIs)

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Keywords

civic engagement, citizens' initiatives, civil society, spatial development, responsibility, cohesion, interviews, qualitative research

Data Type

qualitative

Language

german; english

Abstract

The project examines citizens' place-based engagement and considers these activities as a contribution to civil societies' assumption of responsibility. The aim is to understand cohesion within its embeddedness in different socio-spatial framework conditions.
The project's background is formed by current ecological, economic, and social crises that affect

society as a whole and whose consequences are reflected in new negotiation processes. In particular, responsibilities and competencies are being renegotiated and attributed between the state, the market, and civil society. While state responsibility is maintained or expanded in some regulatory areas, citizens are addressed as more responsible in others. Relevant examples encompass activities in citizens' immediate living environment, which unbureaucratically contribute to socio-spatial development, e.g. providing everyday support, and participating in processes to design, shape and create their surroundings.
Thus, a renewed and crucial relevance is ascribed to the assumption of responsibility by civil society – defined as the provision of voluntary, unpaid, and common good-oriented activities. Consequently, citizens' contributions are encouraged by several incentives and impulses.
Using this as starting point, the study referred to interviews with engaged citizens from German study areas, which differ in terms of essential spatial characteristics. In contrast, interviews from international data collections in Albania, Greece, and Northern Macedonia were analysed.
Finally, i) linkages between social and spatial framework conditions, the assumption of responsibility (on a local level), and cohesion are to be reconstructed. In practice, this knowledge can ii) provide a range of innovative options for action to stakeholders in politics and spatial planning.

Contributor

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Funding Institution

BMBF

Temporal Coverage

8/2021 - 3/2023

Time Dimension

cross-sectional study

Sampled Universe

volunteering citizens from a total of four different study areas in Germany (as well as from Northern Macedonia, Albania and Greece)

Sampling

theoretical sampling; snowball sampling

Collection Mode

personal interview, online interview

Geograhic Coverage

Hannover; Leipzig; Mulda; Beckum

Resource Type

audiofiles, transcripts, videofiles

Availability

limited access due to general data protection regulation of the EU; little consent from the interviewpartners to share the data for secondary use

Institution

Leibniz Universität Hannover

Publications

Baier, J., Knaps, F., and Herrmann, S. (2023) 'Co-Producing urban neighborhoods: (Non-)Collaboration between Citizens Initiatives and Municipalities in Germany' in Othengrafen, F., Herrmann, S., Pencic, D., and Lazarevski, S. (ed.) Social Cohesion and Resilience through Citizen Engagement: A Place-based Approach. Northhampton / Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers.

Baier, J., Herrmann, S., Knaps, F., and Othengrafen, F. (2023) 'Zur räumlichen Spezifik zivilgesellschaftlichen Engagements: Eine Kontrastierung subjektiver Sichtweisen engagierter Bürger*innen aus deutschen und internationalen Fallstudien' in Groh-Samberg, O., and Vogel, B. (ed.) Die Aufgabe des Zusammenhalts. FGZ-Cluster 2-Sammelband, im Erscheinen.