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Civic Engagement – A New Self-Understanding of Villages?



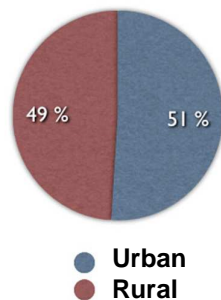
Subject:
Research project on
future village development

Geodetic Institute & Institute of Environmental Planning, Leibniz University Hannover

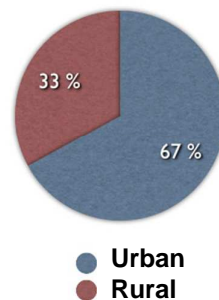
Motivation – Background of the presentation

- Background 1: Place or Sphere to live:
 - Urban sphere - without alternative?
 - Rural sphere –restraint/ bondage for all who failed to leave or a real alternative to live?

World Population - today



World Population - 2050



Official aim of regional development in Germany:

- Comparable living conditions in urban and rural regions
- Traditionally strong and successful efforts in rural development

Motivation – Background of the presentation

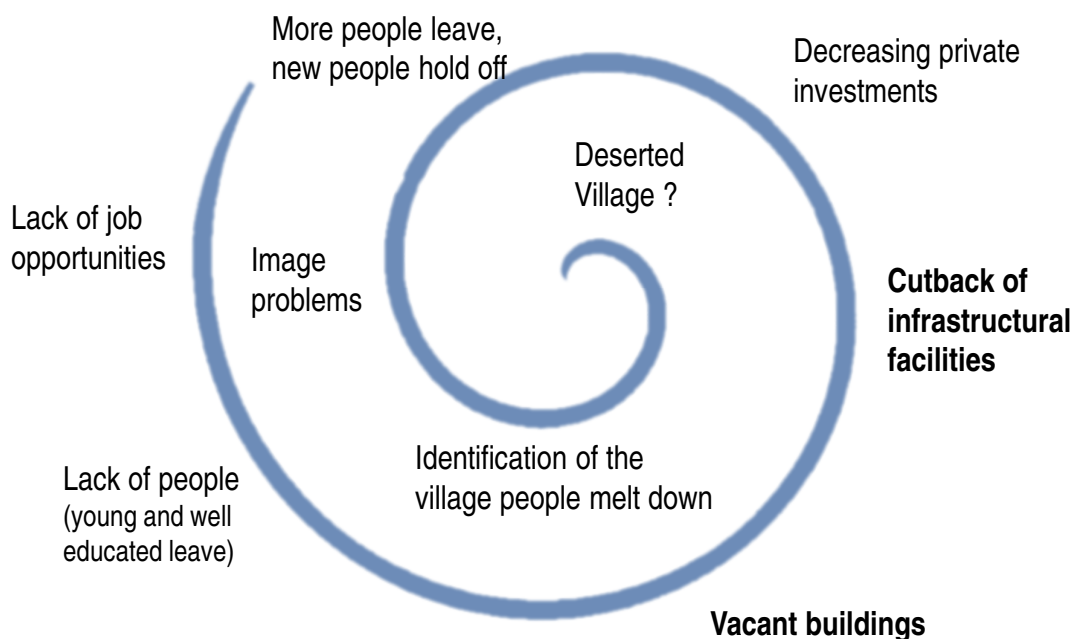
- Background 2: Demographic change in last decade:
 - Urban areas: increasing population, increasing demand, increasing facilities
 - Peripheral rural areas: decreasing population and demand, decreasing villages?

- Many villages have to fight against
 - **vacant properties** and
 - **cutback of infrastructural facilities**

- Which factors are crucial in the future
 - to preserve the function of infrastructural facilities and
 - the quality of life of rural areas?



Downward Spiral of Decreasing Municipalities



Losses of Infrastructure

State and public authorities are not able to keep the infrastructural facilities alive in efficient manner:

- Local Administration, public traffic
- Post, Bank, Retail facilities
- Education and Culture facilities
- Leisure and Sporting facilities
- Fast telecommunication

- Villages have to help themselves!
- Civic Engagement - a solution?
- More civic engagement =
Advance in development opportun.?



"A lot is gone,
but my heart is still here."

Source: Henkel 2004

Civil Engagement *(Bürgerschaftliches Engagement)*

- Voluntary,
- Not focused on material gain,
- Orientated on public welfare,
- Public resp. held in public space,
- Is usually exercised commonly or cooperatively,
- Is associated with a stability and foreseeability.



Source: Deutscher Bundestag (2002), added with BMFSFJ (2012)

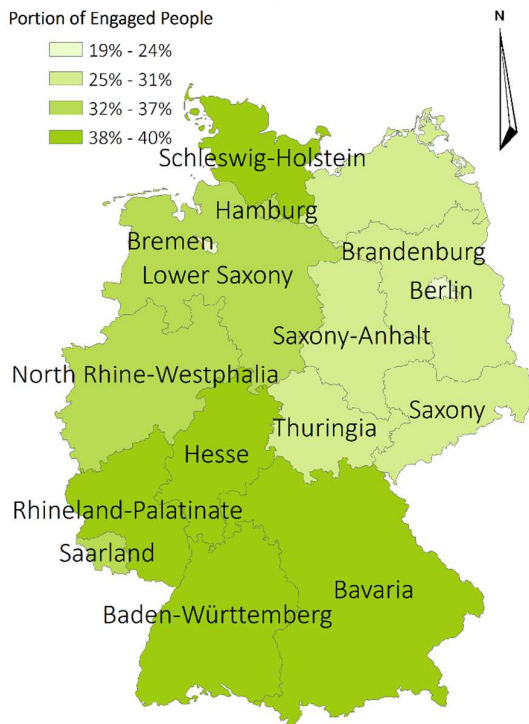
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Voluntary concept of companies to develop in integrated and sustainable manner
- Villages: SMEs (small & medium-sized entrepreneurs)

Which Regions have most engaged people?

Portion of Engaged People

- 19% - 24%
- 25% - 31%
- 32% - 37%
- 38% - 40%



Source: Engagementatlas 2009 (Prognos AG)

- German states: different **engagement quotas**
- Rural Regions:
High engagement quotas
- Small municipalities:
Highest engagement quotas

Project „Engagement as a driving force in rural areas“



- ERDF-funded project, 6 rural villages integrated
- Main questions:
 - How can civic engagement support village renewal?
 - Which aspects and framework are relevant for engagement?
 - How can public stakeholders promote civic engagement?

Project „Engagement as a driving force in rural areas“

Process and methods

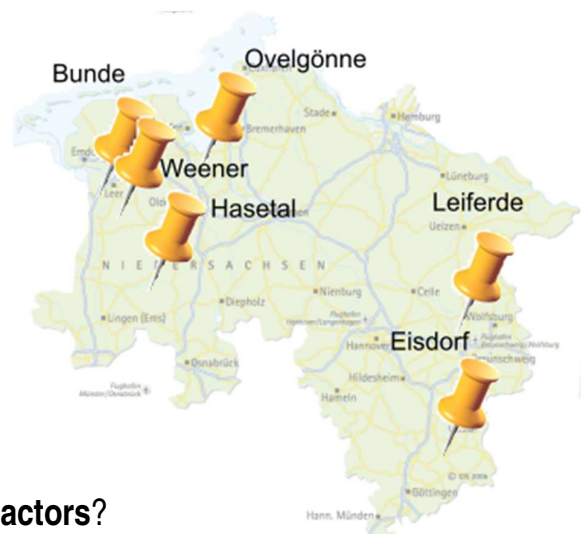
- Questionnaire in 6 municipalities (household survey)
- CSR survey (interviews of responsible persons in companies)
- Workshop with stakeholders (validation)
- Literature: Results of other surveys
- Case studies: Key interviews with project participants

Aims:

- ➔ **Recommendations for action of municipalities**
How can engagement be initiated and/or supported?

Project „Engagement as a driving force in rural areas“

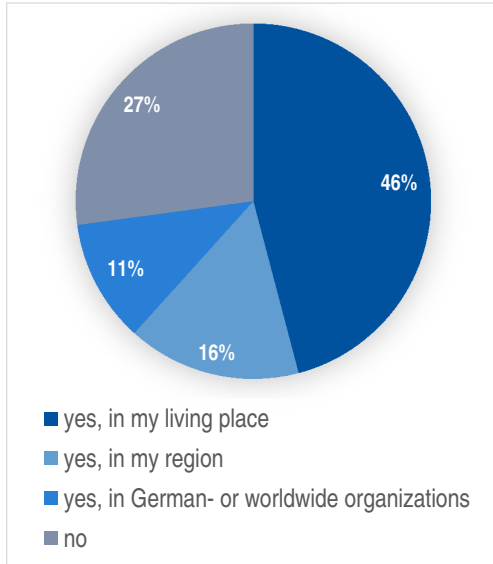
- **Household Survey**
 - 15.000 Households
 - in 6 municipalities
 - Return of 1'495 questionnaires (9 %)
- **Questions**
 - Which **willingness** of engagement can be stated in the municipalities?
 - Is engagement dependent on **personal factors**?
 - How is engagement influenced by **external factors**?



Results Household Survey I Engaged Persons

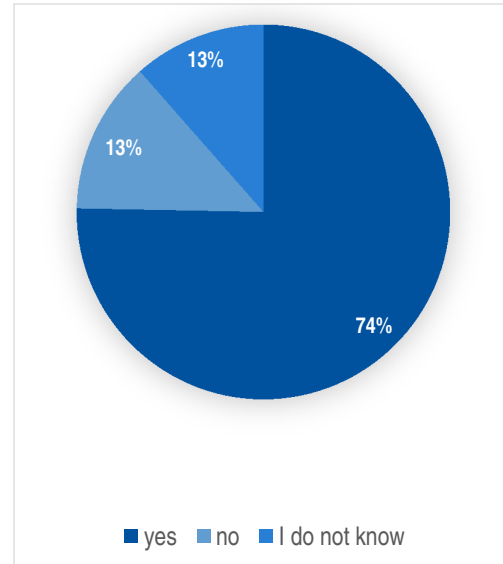
Level/ Priority of commitment

(n=1.495, Number of responses,
Multiple answers possible)

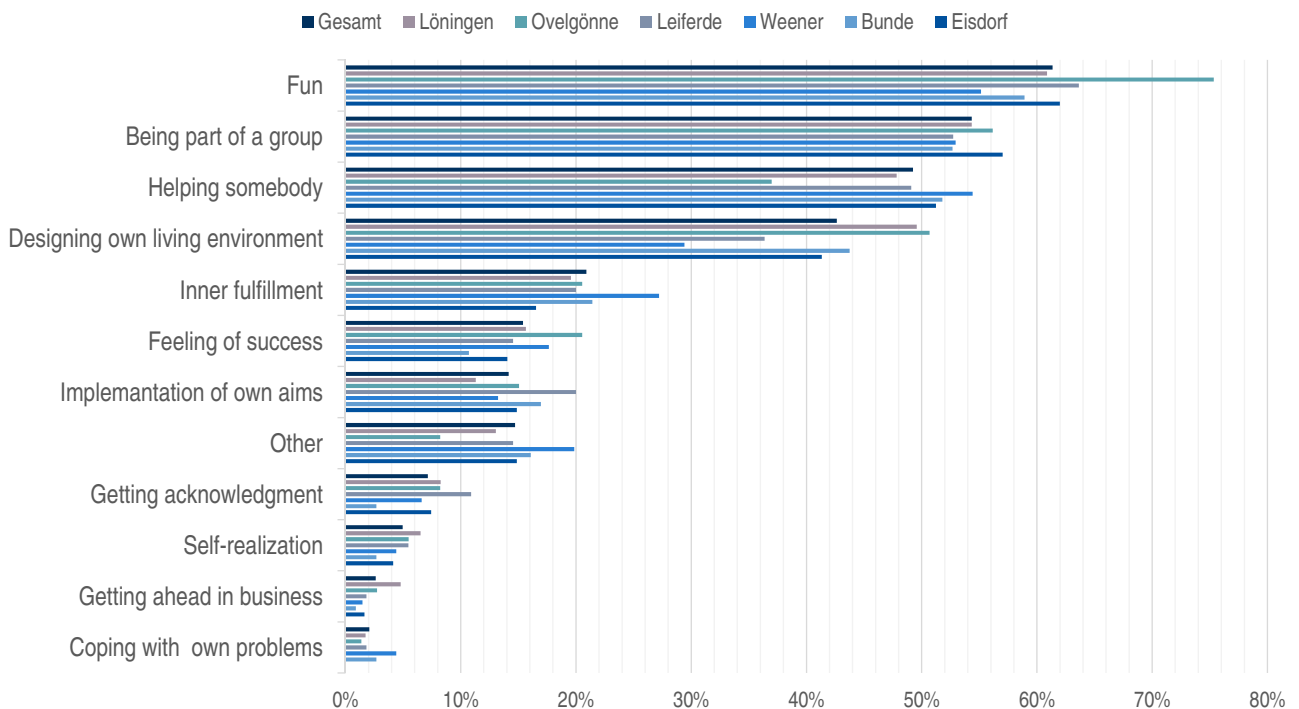


Proportion of persons committed

(n=1.495, in percent)



Results Household Survey I Why are you committed?



Results Household Survey I

Biggest Problems in village development

	Eisdorf	Bunde	Weener	Leiferde	Ovelgönne	Löningen	In total
1.	Public Transport	Vacancies/ Moribund center	Vacancies/ Moribund center	Traffic Infrastructure	Public Transport	Traffic Infrastructure	Vacancies/ Moribund center
2.	Local Shopping	Aging	Local Shopping	Traffic Safety	Local Shopping	Local Shopping	Local Shopping
3.	Aging	Townscape/ Cleanliness	Offers for youngsters	Public Transport, Through Traffic	Lack of doctors / pharmacies	Local Government / Politics	Traffic Infrastructure

Are there any vacancies in your village?
(n=1.495, in percent)

→ Yes (75 %)

→ Vacancy rates and declining infrastructure are perceived as problems

Results CSR Survey I Local commitment / engagement

- High commitment
 - Companies with long tradition in the region
 - Rather a general commitment than a specific/ targeted support (“Gießkannenprinzip”)

- Commitment
 - depends on individual priorities of the responsible entrepreneur, private and corporate commitment of entrepreneur is not separated
 - less dependent on external influences, less professional motivation
 - Companies are not interested to be responsible for public purposes

Example: Village Resse, Wedemark, Lower Saxony

Village

- 2.500 inhabitants
- Rural region north of Hannover, isolated location
- Strong civic engagement of the citizens
- Organized as registered society (Citizens for Resse e.V.)
- Collecting members and donations, e. g. co-operative societies of citizens

Realised projects:

- Purchase of a former bank building and re-use as doctors' surgery
- New construction of a supermarket at cooperative basis (*Genossenschaft*)
- New cash point
- Information center on surrounding moorlands
- Next project: organizing a pharmacy



Conclusions

- Conditions of engagement:
 - Rising number of citizens want to commit (~ 75 %)
 - Engagement without „limits“ (time, subject etc.) decreases
 - Individual time is the most crucial factor
 - Connected to a limited project, may be periodic, but manageable
 - Public recognition of voluntary work is important
- Mobilisation of citizens because of decreasing infrastructure possible
- Encouragement of engagement more successful with a leading character (“alpha dog”) in the village

Conclusions

- Role of the municipality
 - Still very important, but new requirements, new role
 - Cooperation between municipality and engaged persons is important
 - Municipality loses power
 - Encouraging, moderating, supporting, appreciating position (materially and formally, offering small money)
 - Involved at crucial points, although not explicitly highlighted (land ownership, permits, property purchase, co-financing investment cost)

- Civic engagement is a decisive factor and difference in future development of villages