



ERIS Web Journal 2/2014

SOLID©ITY – Towards a SOLidary, Innovative, Dynamic and Cohesive CITY. Identifying, measuring and analyzing innovative policies and practices in different European countries

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Living conditions in modern European societies are more and more characterised by essential changes due to the (economic) crisis. Economic uncertainty, job migration and social exclusion are just some of the challenges individuals have to face. This leads to an increasing lack of confidence, trust and solidarity among European citizens and at the same time highlights the urgency of supporting European cities to become more resilient and sustainable in order to cope with economic and social crisis. Hence, social protection and inclusion policies are undergoing continuous reform in the light of financial pressures and governance changes. However, while some cities are financially prospering, others have to face deep depression and a decline of citizens' quality of life. How, then, can local authorities measure and strategically and actively support and empower the ability of a city to tackle crisis? What are the most important conditions and what strategies are successful to handle economic crisis and therefore maintain and enhance social cohesion and solidarity among its citizens?

The SOLID©ITY project group makes it its business to address these challenging questions. The research group behind this project is a consortium of European researchers and professionals with various experiences in the field of social policy, social investment and social security. Within a multidisciplinary and comparative approach the SOLID©ITY group wants to develop and use an extended theory of "SOLID©ITY" as a conceptual framework wherein the capability of a city to cope with crisis is dependent on the interplay of four main forces – the structural, economic, cultural and social dimension. On the data base of 10 European cities, the research aim is to empirically identify, portray and evaluate the most relevant factors and strategies which can help local authorities to improve the ability of a city and its citizens to tackle crisis and thus to support European social integration, solidarity and cohesion.

In a first step the research group is going to measure the perception of the living conditions and solidarity within the city among the citizens, elevated by a random survey. On this basis a "SOLID©ITY-INDEX" will be developed to compare the resilience and ability to tackle crisis of the different cities. In a further step, the local conditions will be analyzed on the basis of existing municipal/local data concerning the four dimensions mentioned above which will be then analysed and related to the SOLID©ITY-INDEX. In that way, it is possible to

ascertain statistical correlations between certain policy areas and their importance and potential for the solidity and resilience of a city. In a third step, the project group will evaluate the social outcomes, social returns and effectiveness of interventions and investments by the respective local authorities and the local civil societies. Certain policy strategies concerning the different dimensions will be identified and analyzed in the context of the local conditions and in comparison with the SOLID©ITY-INDEX. The results may then be used as a tool to develop, analyse and promote strategies to obtain and strengthen the solidity of a city and thus improve the ability of cities to tackle crisis. Recommendations on how to allocate resources for best results to different fields of political intervention will help local governments to develop strategies and programs to enhance citizens' resilience against external shocks and to enhance the sense of solidarity among them.

Contract

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