

New social contracts across European cities against the background of the socio-ecological transition? Looking at citizens' participation in the governance of green spaces

Judith Schicklinski

Free University of Bozen - Bolzano

The on-going destruction of humanities' livelihoods in a dis-embedded economy highly jeopardizes the idea of a more ecological, economic and social sustainable Europe and asks for (a) new European social contract(s), in which individuals collectively assume responsibility for future generations without neglecting their own right on a good life.

How must such (a) new contract(s) look like today against the background of the socio-ecological transition (SET)?

The theoretical part of this research project is twofold. Firstly, it displays the current state of the art on the linkage between classical and modern social contract theory and the SET to show the unsustainability of previous social contracts. Secondly, it asks about the role of new social contracts on the local level across Europe, keeping in mind that, according to the slogan "think globally, act locally", the local level is paramount for sustainable development. Following the necessity of local re-embedding processes, numerous "small social contracts" (von Winterfeld / Biesecker) have emerged. How must they be designed to reach sustainable local/regional development? What are the roles of the involved parties/actors coming from the interacting and overlapping spheres of the state, the market and civil society? Which contract components are necessary, and how are they shaped (gender, generations, work, citizens' participation...)?

All over Europe self-organized civil society movements are emerging on the grassroots level to tackle local challenges, becoming active players in local governance processes, practising an active citizenship. These social experiments have even been intensified as a result of tight public local budgets. Their activities contribute to the functioning and well-being of a European society aiming for sustainability. For their development, an enabling, innovative and fostering local policy framework is necessary, allowing for constructive interaction with local politics and administration.

The empirical part of the project will examine in a case study approach the institutional preconditions of a new interplay between state, market and civil society in the local governance of green spaces in different European cities to gain a deepened understanding of one of the fundamental contract components. For that, it will be drawn on qualitative data from a sample compiled in the scope of the project [wwwforEurope](http://wwwforEurope.eu)¹ (interviews and case study reports). This data will be supplemented with expert interviews with scholars and with actors

¹ Workpackage 5 of this project examines the state of the SET in 40 cities across Europe (www.foreurope.eu) .