

MAKING THE CITY A VILLAGE?

AN URBAN-RURAL COMPARISON OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF CRISES

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

SOCIAL COHESION IN CRISES

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL STUDIES SHOW THAT SOCIAL COHESION CAN BE REGARDED AS A KEY FACTOR IN INCREASING RESILIENCE TOWARDS CRISIS AND DISASTERS.

The joint research project "Resilience through Social Cohesion - The Role of Organizations" (ResOrt)* analyses the role of social cohesion in the work of civil protection organizations, welfare and neighborhood organizations as well

as local governments in overcoming crises, disasters and social upheavals. For that purpose, ResOrt examines the underlying (socio-spatial) conditions that foster social cohesion at small-scale level and how social cohesion in districts and neighborhoods can be strengthened by the (cooperative) work of different organizations in order to better cope with crises and social upheavals in the future.

OUTPUT

Recommendations for organizations on how to address aspects of social cohesion as a resilience factor in strategy development and how to strengthen social cohesion.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

SOCIAL COHESION AND THE WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT

THE CORONA CRISIS FUELS AN URBAN SCEPTICISM THAT ALREADY EXISTED BEFORE THE PANDEMIC AND CURRENTLY LEADS TO A REDISCOVERY OF THE RESILIENCE OF RURAL STRUCTURES.

While the city as the focal point of global networking is suddenly experienced as threatening and vulnerable, the countryside is appreciated as a shelter of retreat. Rural life appears to be a place of communitarisation, and therefore

seems to offer better capacities to cope with inevitable global crises than the presumably anonymous social structures of big cities.

Based on a written-postal population survey and a "lost letter"-experiment in the German city of Wuppertal, the research project ResOrt explores the relationship between the perceived social cohesion and the expectations for neighborly help and the willingness to provide social support.

The results of a structural equation model show a positive correlation between the perceived social cohesion in the residential area and the expectation of neighbors to help each other in case of an event. In turn, the expectations for help have a positive influence on their own willingness to support in crisis situations.

PERCEIVED SOCIAL COHESION



EXPECTED WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE SOCIAL SUPPORT



OWN WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE SOCIAL SUPPORT

SOCIAL COHESION IN WUPPERTAL

URBAN-RURAL COMPARISON

RATHER URBAN

Population density/ km ²	1.875	Proportion of semi-detached houses	13,3 %
Proportion of senior citizens	24,6 %	Proportion of enclosed building blocks	2,7 %
Proportion of single houses	11,9 %	Proportion of road traffic area	11,8 %
Perceived social cohesion**	2,8	Returned lost letters	6,5
		Willingness to provide social support	1,9

VERY URBAN

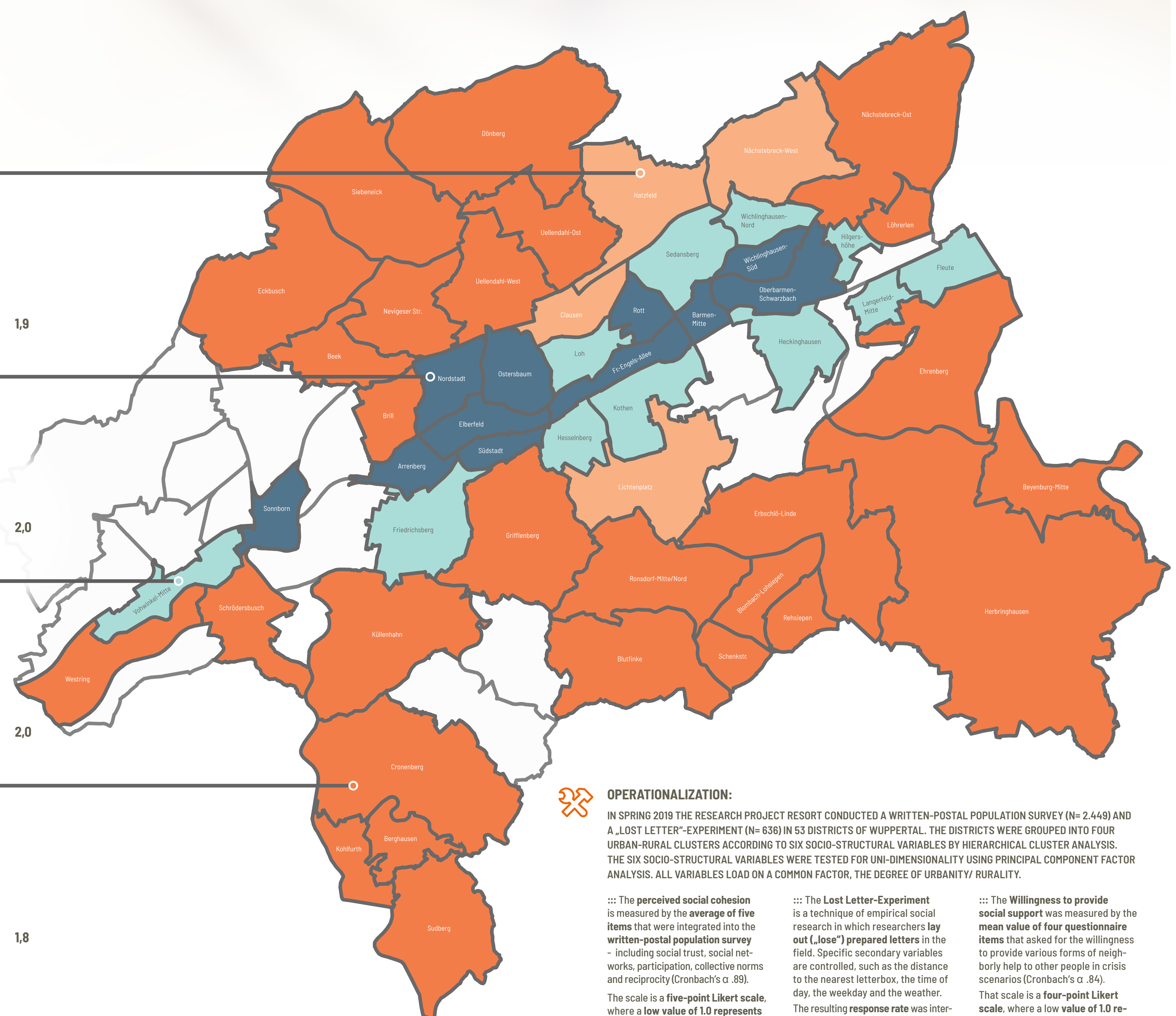
Population density/ km ²	10.247	Proportion of semi-detached houses	1,5 %
Proportion of senior citizens	16,8 %	Proportion of enclosed building blocks	24 %
Proportion of single houses	2,6 %	Proportion of road traffic area	22,5 %
Perceived social cohesion	3,4	Returned lost letters	6,9
		Willingness to provide social support	2,0

URBAN

Population density/ km ²	5.179	Proportion of semi-detached houses	4,7 %
Proportion of senior citizens	18,8 %	Proportion of enclosed building blocks	15,8 %
Proportion of single houses	7,8 %	Proportion of road traffic area	12,5 %
Perceived social cohesion	3,2	Returned lost letters	6,9
		Willingness to provide social support	2,0

RATHER RURAL

Population density/ km ²	1.547	Proportion of semi-detached houses	7,1 %
Proportion of senior citizens	24,9 %	Proportion of enclosed building blocks	1,7 %
Proportion of single houses	18,8 %	Proportion of road traffic area	7,6 %
Perceived social cohesion	2,7	Returned lost letters	8,4
		Willingness to provide social support	1,8



OPERATIONALIZATION:

IN SPRING 2019 THE RESEARCH PROJECT RESORT CONDUCTED A WRITTEN-POSTAL POPULATION SURVEY (N= 2.449) AND A „LOST LETTER“-EXPERIMENT (N= 636) IN 53 DISTRICTS OF WUPPERTAL. THE DISTRICTS WERE GROUPED INTO FOUR URBAN-RURAL CLUSTERS ACCORDING TO SIX SOCIO-STRUCTURAL VARIABLES BY HIERARCHICAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS. THE SIX SOCIO-STRUCTURAL VARIABLES WERE TESTED FOR UNI-DIMENSIONALITY USING PRINCIPAL COMPONENT FACTOR ANALYSIS. ALL VARIABLES LOAD ON A COMMON FACTOR, THE DEGREE OF URBANITY/ RURALITY.

The perceived social cohesion is measured by the average of five items that were integrated into the written-postal population survey - including social trust, social networks, participation, collective norms and reciprocity (Cronbach's α : .89). The scale is a five-point Likert scale, where a low value of 1.0 represents a high level of social cohesion.

The Lost Letter-Experiment is a technique of empirical social research in which researchers lay out („lose“) prepared letters in the field. Specific secondary variables are controlled, such as the distance to the nearest letterbox, the time of day, the weekday and the weather. The resulting response rate was interpreted as low-threshold helpfulness.

The willingness to provide social support was measured by the mean value of four questionnaire items that asked for the willingness to provide various forms of neighborly help to other people in crisis scenarios (Cronbach's α : .84). That scale is a four-point Likert scale, where a low value of 1.0 represents high willingness to help.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

CONCLUSION

THE INNER-CITY COMPARISON OF URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN WUPPERTAL SHOWS THAT IN THE (RATHER) RURAL DISTRICTS THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL COHESION IS ON AVERAGE MORE PRONOUNCED THAN IN (RATHER) URBAN DISTRICTS.

That is, in rural districts a higher willingness to provide social support can be expected. With exception of „rather urban“ districts, this finding is

also reflected in the response rates of the „lost letter“-Experiment.

As the map illustrates, the urban districts are located in the valley of the city center along the river Wupper. The more rural districts follow the topographical pattern of Wuppertal and are primarily situated on the hills of the northern and southern peripheries of the city. While the rather

rural areas of Wuppertal are characterized by higher proportion of senior citizens, single and semi-detached houses, the urban districts of the city center are shaped by a high population density and higher proportions of enclosed building blocks and road traffic areas.

PROJECT COORDINATION

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PROJECT PARTNERS

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ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

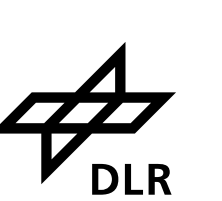
The collaborative project is assisted by the associated partners of the Global Disaster Preparedness Center of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (GDPC), the Association for Social and Cultural Work (VskA) and Caritas International.



POSTER PRESENTATION

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT



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