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(UN)JUST STRUCTURES AND PRACTISES OF COLLABORATION IN RURAL SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP – INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Co-production of public and basic service as a joint endeavour between public sector, social enterprises and residents is often stated as a possible solution to the economic and infrastructural decline in rural areas (Farmer/Hill/Munoz 2012). Much hope is attached to the ways how social enterprises might reduce the costs of public service provision and empower the residents to actively develop their service and localities. However, current research often focuses on individual social entrepreneurs, tight social structures and the role of economic growth in the success of the enterprises. Such rational and functional approaches bypass questions of wellbeing justice and privilege within the practise and spaces of social entrepreneurship.

This presentation, instead, relies on diverse economies (Cameron 2009) and practice -approaches (Wenger 2008) defining social enterprises as collaborative and multi-scalar endeavours. It is based on initial comparative analysis of two qualitative case studies in North-Eastern Brandenburg, Germany and Alentejo, Portugal, in the fields of primary-, and civic education. The aim is to discuss firstly, whether collaborative social enterprises can sustainably enhance the rural residents' access to basic service, as well as their political agency in tackling regional disparities. Secondly it asks, how these potentials are influenced by privileges and (in)justice both in the level of regional resources and infrastructure, as well as in the daily work experiences in social enterprises.

The initial analysis suggests that service-producing social enterprises in rural areas can reduce their participants' disparities in accessing service as well as engaging in their production. However, regional inequalities in the diversity of institutional funding and support influence on the organisations' stability, working conditions and their political change agency. Collaborative decisionmaking within the organisations may enhance just participation, but also contribute to serious conflicts. The presentation is a part of a PhD-research within international research project RurAction in Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig.

Literatur

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