

## The Citizens' Exhibition: A Combination of Socio-scientific, Participative and Artistic Elements

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### Key words:

Citizens' Exhibition, participation, photography, action research, city and regional research, community psychology

**Abstract:** Through its incorporation of socio-scientific, participative and artistic elements, the "Citizens' Exhibition" is an example of how applied performative social science can be implemented. The method was created by teaching qualitative methods and community psychology approaches in courses for students of psychology in the 1990's. The Citizens' Exhibition combines qualitative methods, such as interview and text interpretation, with artistic-aesthetic methods, such as photography and film, to form an integrated concept. In the tradition of action research, the practice is applied in the exploration of societal issues. The Citizens' Exhibition supports dialogue and furthering communication processes between the stakeholders through the presentation of diverse perspectives. In this regard, the staging of the exhibition opening has a particular importance. The following article about the Citizens' Exhibition presents the practice's origin and history in the first section and, in the second section, offers an introduction to the individual methodological steps. In the third section, various Citizens' Exhibitions are described as illustrations of the method. The last section discusses the vision of the Citizens' Exhibition, its performative component, strengths and limitations, considers the results of an existing evaluation study and looks at the future uses of the practice. Particular regard should be paid here to a combination of methods that enable a long-term participation effect, the expansion of participatory possibilities for the research subjects, and experimentation with additional artistic methods.

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## 1. Origin and History of the Citizens' Exhibition

The idea to present the results of qualitative research in the form of an exhibition was developed in the 1990s from our experience of interposing qualitative methods and community psychological approaches in the psychology curriculum at the Technische Universität Berlin. The instruction in qualitative diagnostics and research was carried out in a preliminary theoretical [lecture](#). Parallel to the lecture, a two-semester project course was offered. In the first part of this seminar the participants developed interview guidelines based on a Berlin-related research issue from the field of community psychology and dealt with this particular issue theoretically and through participatory observation. Subsequently, each student led an open interview with one of the stakeholders involved in the topic field. In the second part of the course the interviews were analysed according to the approach of Grounded Theory ("conceptual organisation" as a short form of the Grounded Theory Methodology according to STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1996, p.17). [1]

One of these project courses was concerned with the construction site on a central square in Berlin to be built anew, the Potsdamer Platz. A student, Andreas TAGLINGER, who was at the same time an instructor in photography at the Universität der Künste Berlin, made the recommendation to photograph the interviewees. The project group decided to present the results of the project in the form of selected interview excerpts together with the photographic portraits of the interviewees in an exhibition after the course. The interview partners (e.g., the Senator for Urban Development responsible for the project, planners, construction workers, caterers and the manager of the "Infobox", a kind of exhibition tower that informed citizens about the progress of the construction) gave their permission to be photographed and, for the exhibition, waived the otherwise conventional privacy protection for the interview material. [2]

The exhibition, *The People of the Potsdamer Platz Construction Site* took place in 1997-1998 in the Infobox and aroused remarkable interest in the press and proved to be a great motivating factor for the students. Based on this experience, the presentation of results in an exhibition with photographic portraits and interview excerpts was repeated in the following years in several project courses. In this way, further exhibitions came about, including the exhibition *The Move to Berlin's Periphery: Talks with Migrants to the Edges* in 1998 and two exhibitions on the topic of "social city" based on city quarter management in Berlin, an action for city neighbourhoods with "special developmental needs", that is a special socially and spatially problematic situation: *Wrangelkiez* and *Magdeburger Platz* (1999/2000). When the method was developed in the context of the preparation of the exhibition *The People of the Potsdamer Platz Construction Site*, the participation aspect still had no specific meaning. Only with the Citizens' Exhibitions about city quarter management was the aspect of citizens' participation emphasised. Here the concept was combined with the Citizens' Jury participatory method. In the Citizens' Jury, a random sample of the citizens of a city district works for several days, with expense allowances, on a topic, and their results are comprised in the form of a Citizens' Report (DIENEL, 1997). The

Citizens' Exhibitions *Wrangelkiez* and *Magdeburger Platz* took on the goal, as an addition of the Citizens' Report, to illustrate the perspectives of the residents about their neighbourhood; furthermore, this was a way to document the working methods of the Citizens' Jury. [3]

The participative element was later deepened in two Citizens' Exhibitions about the temporary use of urban brownfield sites in Berlin-Friedrichshain and in the Campi Flegrei (the Gulf of Naples) in the context of the European research project, "Urban Catalysts: Strategies for Temporary Uses" (cp. MISSELWITZ, OSWALT & OVERMEYER, 2007). SCHOPHAUS and DIENEL (2003a, 2003b) included the participative element into the methodological concept and coined the name "Citizens' Exhibition" for the practice. The impact of the Citizens' Exhibition in the Campi Flegrei was evaluated by PROCENTESE (2006) in a follow-up study (see Section 4). [4]

## **2. Introduction to the Method**

The Citizens' Exhibition uses the aesthetic and emotional power of visual material, that is to say its performative element, in order to accomplish two goals: its first aim, its socio-scientific element, is to register and present people's subjective views incorporating a specific thematic context such as work on a construction site, life in a neighbourhood or migration out of a rural region. Its second aim, its participative element, is to offer the various interest groups the possibility to communicate their attitudes, goals, desires and activities in this thematic context, to start a discussion process and to enter into a dialogue with the public. [5]

The methodological procedure for the formation of a Citizens' Exhibition can be divided into eight steps. [6]

### **2.1 Choice and concretion of a topic**

The beginning of a Citizens' Exhibition is the selection of an appropriate topic. The sources for this topic selection are the social problems, e.g. the impoverishment and desolation of a city quarter or the degradation of transportation infrastructure in a rural region. In an ideal case, the concretion of the exhibition topic occurs in collaboration with representatives from the involved interest groups. [7]

### **2.2 Selection of interview partners**

Sampling methods of qualitative social research are used for the selection of interview partners for qualitative interviews (cp. MERKENS, 2000). According to the principle of theoretical sampling (STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1996, pp.148ff.), relevant interests and concerned groups can be identified in the course of the research. The aim is to select a diversity of possible stakeholders and thereby span the plurality of perceptions. According to the terminology of Grounded Theory Methodology the selection process ends with "theoretical saturation", i.e. ,

when no further relevant positions can be identified for the problem situation. A random selection, however, is also conceivable; for instance, Citizens' Exhibitions can be combined with practices that involve an assembled social group through a representative random sampling. An example is the previously mentioned Citizen's Jury which preceded the Citizens' Exhibitions *Wrangelkiez* and *Magdeburger Platz* with a representative random selection as a participation practice (SENSTADT, 2000). The interests of those involved should be observed in the selection of relevant person groups. A Citizens' Exhibition can be used to make heard the voices and positions of one of the concerned groups that was neglected in the planning process. It thereby becomes a publicity medium specialised for this group. Especially in conflict-loaded problem situations, as many as possible of the groups involved in the conflict, ideally all, should be involved, thereby representing the numerically smaller groups as well. Otherwise, the risk arises that some groups feel discriminated against, boycott the Citizens' Exhibition, and intensify existing conflicts or rivalries. In this case the Citizens' Exhibition would not be able to fulfil its goal of facilitating a discussion process between all participants. [8]

### **2.3 Conducting interviews**

In the preparation of a Citizens' Exhibition, semi-structured interviews supported by guidelines are usually employed. The interviews are recorded and transcribed literally. A commonly applied interview practice in the preparation of a Citizens' Exhibition is the Problem Centered Interview (WITZEL, 1985, 2000). This interview method was developed based on Grounded Theory and enables the inclusion of individual subject matter, subjective perceptions and treatments. An orientation on a socially relevant issue and a biographical entry point are characteristic of the Problem Centered Interview. It enables reflection about the problem area at hand and access to the subjective meaning that this area has for the interviewee. There are, however, other interview methods that are applicable in the preparation of a Citizens' Exhibition. It is important that the interviewees have enough room during the interview to delineate their subjective perceptions, to present their position and to speak about their commitment, problems, desires, hopes and activities. As the Citizen Exhibition requires photos of the interviewee it is necessary to obtain an exemption from privacy protection, either orally or in the form of a written contract because the interview subjects will be publicly presented visually and with interview citations, and are thereby identifiable. [9]

### **2.4 Making photographs**

In parallel, the interviewees are photographed. The photos can be made in connection with the interview or on another date. In order to assure high quality for the photographs, it is recommended that the researcher collaborate with a photographer. According to the topic of the Citizens' Exhibition, other subjects from the interviewee's living environment can also be photographed. In the context of formulating a Citizens' Exhibition about an impoverished city quarter, pictures of certain places in the area that are important to the interviewee or symbolise the problem in a special way can also be taken. In this case, the

interviewees themselves should recommend additional subjects. An alternative or additional approach assigns the role of photographer to the interviewee. With the means of photo-documentation, they can document relevant aspects of their environment and themselves become researchers. This type of intensive participation has to date only been practiced in a few Citizens' Exhibitions. The visual material that is used for a Citizens' Exhibition does not have to be limited to photography. Films have been used, and the incorporation of further artistic elements is also conceivable. [10]

## **2.5 Interview analysis**

The fifth step in the preparation of a Citizens' Exhibition comprises analysis of the interviews. The goal here is to summarise the perspectives of the interviewees as succinctly as possible, whereby an abridgement of the most extensive interviews will be necessary. A commonly applied practice is the documentary montage technique which seeks to provide an abridged account in the wording of the interview (see LEGEWIE, 1987). Additionally, codification practices such as Qualitative Content Analysis (MAYRING, 1993, 2000) or theoretical codification based on Grounded Theory Methodology (STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1996) can be applied. Qualitative Content Analysis allows analysis of interviews by means of a category list which can be established at the beginning of the analysis and can later be expanded. In this way, individual text passages from the interviews are organised into relevant, previously developed content-based categories. In theoretical codification, theoretical concepts are sought for the text passages at hand. [11]

The result of the interview analysis is either a montage of the interview text including its relevant passages or a composition of interview excerpts organised by categories which can serve as the text basis for the exhibits alongside the visual material. The interview excerpts should characterise the interviewees as succinctly as possible. For delicate topics such as conflict-loaded ones, checking the selection of excerpts with the interviewee is recommended. [12]

## **2.6 Preparation of the exhibition**

The exhibition should combine text and visual elements into exhibits in a way that the participants' issues and perspectives find expression in a complex and vivid way. For this purpose, a financial and aesthetic investment may be necessary to a greater or lesser extent. In the simplest case, the exhibits are composed of inexpensive flipcharts or cardboard displays on which photo or digital prints and accompanying texts can be pasted. Digital technology enables intricately composed image and text montages as well. It can be expensive to print image and text displays on high quality materials and to laminate them on durable and transportable mounts. [13]

It is important that the exhibition takes place "on site", in the area concerned, e.g., in the living environment of the subjects and concerned groups presented in the exhibition. The exhibition should be reachable and accessible without financial

costs for the concerned subjects. A Citizens' Exhibition about a city quarter with a particular problem situation should take place in this neighbourhood in a location that is as central as possible. The clarity of the exhibition for the various concerned groups also needs to be considered. A Citizens' Exhibition in a city quarter with many immigrants should present the text in translation(s) as well. [14]

The preparation of the exhibition includes the opening, its staging and dramaturgy. [15]

## 2.7 Exhibition opening

The exhibition opening comprises the climax of the experience and is a methodological step of particular importance. It must be staged with a high efficacy for publicity so that as many visitors as possible will be drawn to the exhibition after the opening. Only through a wide appeal can a Citizens' Exhibition make a contribution to initiating and supporting an engagement with a topic and to the desired process of change through the participation of concerned stakeholders. Interviewees who are presented in the exhibition generally accept the invitation to the opening gladly and with a high degree of motivation and bring relatives, friends, acquaintances and others who are interested in the topic. The circle of people who are invited should go beyond this group to address all interested and concerned citizens, stakeholders, lobbyists and above all responsible local politicians. Invitations to the press and media should also be kept in mind because media response draws further visitors. [16]

The opening of a Citizens' Exhibition corresponds formally to a *vernissage* (gallery opening); through its participative demands, however, it also gains the character of a public forum. As a precondition for this, as wide a circle as possible should be invited comprised of participating citizens as well as representatives of relevant interest groups, citizens' initiatives, political policy makers and personalities involved in public life. At the opening, not only initiators, constituents, politicians or researchers should have a say, but also interviewees and representatives from interest groups and citizens' initiatives. The opening can very well be combined with a moderated round table discussion in which citizen representatives can speak about the results of the Citizens' Exhibition and discuss their desires or requests with political policy makers. [17]

For comprehensive topics that are not limited to one place but are interesting for citizens in other places as well, a Citizens' Exhibition can also become a travelling exhibition. The previously mentioned topic of temporary uses for urban brownfields, for instance, is relevant for many cities. Therefore, a Citizens' Exhibition on this topic that was developed in a specific city can also be shown in other cities or Citizens' Exhibitions can be exchanged between cities. In this way, they broaden the level of attention and the circle of discussion for the issues presented in them and the various positions connected to them. [18]

## 2.8 Follow up of the participatory process

Experience has shown that the impetus produced by a Citizens' Exhibition for public discussion of grievances generally advances, if not actually materialises, the establishment of an initiative group of engaged stakeholders. They should follow up on concerns articulated in the exhibition and if need be see to it that measures towards reform are taken. [19]

## 3. Examples for Various Forms of Citizens' Exhibitions

Since the presentation of the first Citizens' Exhibition *The People of the Potsdamer Platz Construction Site* (1997-1998) one decade ago, a wide array of further Citizens' Exhibitions has arisen in various thematic contexts and research projects (a selection is offered at <http://www.nexus-berlin.com/ba/index2.html>). The following examples are intended to show the range of application for the method and to illustrate the steps described above. The choice of these examples was determined by their methodological distinctiveness such as the additional use of video material or the parallel implementation of the method in different locations addressing the same topic. [20]

### 3.1 A typical Citizens Exhibition: *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning*

The [Citizens' Exhibition \*Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning\*](#) (2006-2007) is a typical example because it bears the following characteristics:

- The exhibition arose in the context of a research project which dealt with a current social issue.
- For data collection, a combination comprised of Problem Centered Interviews (WITZEL, 1985, 2000) and Episodic Interviews (FLICK, 2000, 2002, pp.158ff.) was chosen.
- The interviews were analysed with the help of Qualitative Content Analysis (MAYRING, 1993, 2000).
- A portion of the interview subjects were photographed for the Citizens' Exhibition and the photos were assembled with selected interview excerpts in the exhibition.
- The exhibition opening met with wide public interest and the exhibition was presented for two additional weeks.



Figure 1: Front side of the invitation to the opening of the Citizens' Exhibition *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning* [21]

The thematic background of the Citizens' Exhibition *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning* is based on the emigration of young people from the East into the West of the Federal Republic of Germany. East Germany, due to low birth rates, emigration and low rates of remigration and immigration, has lost at an average 4.3% of its population since the reunification in 1990. The main cause of the emigration is the markedly worse economic situation in comparison to West Germany. Many young people see no professional opportunities for themselves and leave their East German homeland. The structure of the population changes. There are ever fewer young people and ever fewer women. The image of many cities is shaped by shrinkage and vacancy. The infrastructure does not continue to be built. The economy is threatened by a lack of skilled labour. In order to somewhat counter this difficult development, measures must be sought to reduce migration, but also to increase immigration and remigration. [22]

Many people who have migrated from East Germany would gladly return to their homeland if they saw a future there. In other words, there is a large potential to be found in remigration. It is this potential which was investigated in the research project "Remigration as a Dynamic Factor for East German Cities", from which the Citizens' Exhibition emerged based on the example of the city Magdeburg. The project was carried out by the Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal (FH), the nexus Institute for Cooperation Management and Interdisciplinary Research GmbH and the Universität Leipzig between the years of 2005 and 2006 (DIENEL et al., 2006), the sponsor was the Federal Ministry for Transportation, Construction and Urban Development. The research in the context of the project was carried out with quantitative and qualitative methods. From a random sampling of a standard telephone survey, re-migrants, i.e., people who earlier had left and returned to Magdeburg, were selected to be interviewed. Thirty-three re-migrants were interviewed, and 13 agreed to allow their interviews to be used for the preparation of a Citizens' Exhibition. As an interview method, the Problem Centered Interview (WITZEL, 1985, 2000) was combined with the Episodic Interview (FLICK, 2000, 2002, pp.158ff.) because the Episodic Interview

concentrates attention in a particular way on experiences that the interviewees had in connection to the subject matter at hand. The recounting of individual episodes is combined with argumentation that makes it possible to comprehend the interviewee's knowledge and decisions. At the centre of the interview guidelines were "stories of returning" i.e., experiences that were connected with the interviewee's emigration and later remigration. Additional main themes were motives for emigration and remigration, the role of economic and personal situations, obstructive and conducive factors in emigration and remigration, and the meaning of homeland. Furthermore interviewees were asked for recommendations for the improvement of life and remigration conditions.

# Wandern und Wiederkommen

## Magdeburger Rückkehrgeschichten





**Ute Berger**  
Geboren in Wollen, in Magdeburg aufgewachsen, 1995 nach Weimar zum Studium des Bauingenieurwesens gegangen, 2001 nach Frankfurt/Main gezogen. Seit 2004 ist Magdeburg Lebensmittelpunkt, der Arbeitsort aber Hannover, beschäftigt als Bauingenieurin im Außenbüro für Projektbau einer Bahntochter, 29 Jahre alt, ein Sohn, 1 1/2 Jahre.

### Heimat

Heimat bedeutet für mich, dass ich mich nicht nur auf das Wochenende beschränken muss, die Freunde wieder zu sehen oder die Kontakte aufrecht zu erhalten. Oder dass ich meine Schwester und meine Mutter jederzeit besuchen kann – ganz einfach. Ich bin einfach gerne hier, gerne bei der Familie und gerne bei den Freunden. Und das hat sich auch über die Jahre nicht geändert. Nur bin ich jetzt abends gebunden durch den Kleinen und es hat sich insofern etwas geändert, dass mein Freund auf Montage ist. Seitdem ich wieder zurück bin, ist er quasi weg und wir sind doch nur am Wochenende zusammen. Aber man kann sich das nicht aussuchen.

### Beziehung zu Magdeburg

Ich bin in Magdeburg aufgewachsen und kenne mich hier aus. Es ist ja meistens so, wenn man irgendwo aufwächst, dass man halt die schönen Ecken ganz besonders gut kennt. Wobei vielleicht die anderen sagen: Ach, Magdeburg ist so hässlich. Der Meinung bin ich nicht. Es gibt viele schöne Orte, zu denen ich gerne gehe. Das Sportangebot ist groß. Ja, auch bei den Sehenswürdigkeiten gibt es viel zu sehen.



### Gründe für den Wegzug

Das ging eigentlich '95 los. Da habe ich Abitur gemacht und bin dann nach Weimar zum Studium gegangen. Und nach dem Studium habe ich gleich Arbeit in Frankfurt am Main bekommen.

### Was kann Magdeburg tun?

Das Grundproblem ist: die Arbeitsplätze fehlen. So ist es nun mal. Ich meine, Sachsen-Anhalt gehört ja zu den familienfreundlichsten Ländern. Das ist auf jeden Fall ein ganz großes Plus. Wenn genug Arbeit da wäre, würden wieder mehr hierher ziehen und ich wäre wahrscheinlich erst gar nicht aus Magdeburg weggegangen, ich würde gerne auf Dauer hier bleiben, das hängt aber von der Arbeit ab. Vielleicht finde ich ja auch irgendwann etwas hier in der Gegend. Erstens ist es schwierig, hier überhaupt etwas zu finden, was einigermaßen sicher ist, und zweitens fehlt meist die ordentliche Bezahlung.

### Soziale Kontakte

Ich sag mal so, es gab Zeiten, da bin ich dann öfter mal von Frankfurt nach Magdeburg gefahren, manchmal aber nur drei, vier Mal im Jahr. Während des Studiums war ich noch recht häufig hier. Aber die Strecke ist doch recht weit und wenn man kein langes Wochenende hat, dann lohnt sich das nicht wirklich. Die Freunde in Frankfurt sind auch meist Zugezogene aus Thüringen und Umgebung.

### Magdeburg heute

Baulich gesehen ist sehr viel passiert. Magdeburg hat sich vorteilhaft entwickelt, auf jeden Fall. In Bezug auf Arbeit, wenn ich an meine Freunde denke, die hier leben, haben die meisten Arbeit. Fühlen sich wohl in Magdeburg und sind zufrieden. Für mich persönlich ist die Arbeit momentan erstmal der wichtigste Grundstein für unsere kleine Familie und deshalb nehme ich jeden Tag den Weg nach Hannover auf mich. Magdeburg möchte ich jedoch nicht missen und deshalb gibt es auch keine örtliche Veränderung bei uns. Die Stimmung hier ist angenehm. Ich kenne Viele, die sagen: Ach Magdeburger, solche sturen Köpfe, aber ich fühle mich wohl.



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Figure 2: Exhibit from the Citizens' Exhibition *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning* [23]

The goal of the Citizens' Exhibition *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning* was to communicate the stories of returning mentioned in the title, to make them visually vital, and to enable a dialogue about remigration between politicians and citizens. By means of the portrait photos on the exhibition displays, the re-migrants gaze out at the observers and, in their text passages, tell the stories of their return, their relationship to Magdeburg, their reasons for leaving and for returning and their current perspective of their home town, and they say what Magdeburg can do to support remigration. [24]

Most of the "stories of returning" that were told in the Citizens' Exhibition are stories of successful emigrants who returned. They express what emigration means for a region. Through remigration, the region regains people who have acquired professional experiences. These people make a contribution to the economic and social development of the region. Through this, the Citizens' Exhibition emphasises not only exchange, but also impetus for political activities. The stories of returning and the recommendations of the re-migrants show that remigration should be supported by political and completely practical measures such as instituting emigrant networks and remigration agencies. [25]

This example shows that the Citizens' Exhibition as a method of performative social research is not exclusively a tool for science. Communication between people stands in the foreground, which directly pertains to the topic of the Citizens' Exhibition. People who have remigrated communicate through this method with people who themselves are confronted with the decision for or against emigration or remigration and with people who, through their professional or political position, are able to take measures toward supporting remigration. [26]

The problem situation presented is not limited to the example of Magdeburg. The topic of remigration is relevant for many cities and regions in East Germany. The exhibition *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning*, conceived as a travelling exhibition, was lent out and thereby contributes to a continued discussion of the topic of remigration.



Figure 3: Exhibition display with a visitor to the Citizens' Exhibition *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning* [27]

### **3.2 Enhancement through film footage: The Citizens' Exhibition *Project Future—Families at University***

The Citizens' Exhibition *Project Future—Families at University* (2006) in most aspects follows the typical methodological procedure, but expands the visual and aesthetic elements with film and thereby highlights a distinctive methodological feature. Exhibits and film portraits from the exhibition can be seen at <http://www.familienfreundliche-hochschule.de/portraits.html>. Exhibition displays from the Citizens' Exhibitions *Emigration and Remigration—Magdeburg Stories of Returning* and *Project Future—Families at University* also appear in a practice handbook about engagement against emigration and unemployment (FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG, RICHTER, FORUM BERLIN 2008). [28]

The Citizens' Exhibition *Project Future—Families at University* also occurs in the context of the problem of emigration in East Germany. It emerged from the research project "Universities as Catalysts for Regional Development in East Germany" in which the nexus Institute for Cooperation Management and Interdisciplinary Research GmbH worked together with the Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal (FH) supported by the Federal Ministry for Transportation, Construction and Urban Development to investigate the family-friendliness at universities in East German model regions with severely declining populations. The goal of the project was to research the connection of economic development, existing human capital and family support, and the enactment of measures to improve family-friendliness at universities (DIENEL, VON BLANCKENBURG, REUL & LESSKE 2006). [29]

Alongside a literature review with an international comparison, quantitative and qualitative data was also collected for this project. Six-hundred-and-two students at three universities in East Germany—The University of Greifswald, the University of Magdeburg and the Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal (FH)—took part in an online survey about starting families during studies and related obstructive factors at the universities and their locations. Interviews were also carried out with 37 university affiliates of various status groups, i.e., students and academic personnel. All of the interview subjects already had children. The students and academically active mothers and fathers were asked about handling their daily routine, their motivations to combine starting a family with studying, their connection to their homeland, their reasons for staying at the location of their university and their appraisal of the conditions at their location. A portion of the interviewees were photographed for the Citizens' Exhibition, and these photographs were supplemented with documentation of typical places and situations from their everyday lives with children at the university. Another portion of the interviewees were filmed during the interview and later in typical situations with their own children or at the university. [30]

The results of the project show that universities and colleges of higher education have a "magnetic" retaining factor and an attractive factor for the immigration of young people and, therefore, for economic and social development in the region. Businesses settle in the area surrounding universities which employ or are

founded by qualified graduates. These businesses in turn create jobs for less-qualified employees as well. The transfer between academics and practice increases innovation and competitiveness for sustainable skill-intensive fields. Starting families while at university has a special meaning for these effects. Of all the factors that influence the decision of graduates to stay in the area of their university, starting a family is the most important. Seventy per cent of those students questioned during the project who had already started a family before graduating want to stay in the region, compared to only 30% of students without children. Measures to improve the family-friendliness at universities can actively support the decision for starting a family while studying or working academically. [31]

In the context of the project, concepts for model measures towards improvement of family-friendliness at universities were developed and applied as exemplars at two university locations (Greifswald and Magdeburg). Alongside activities for a long-term network of concerned subjects and stakeholders (e.g., the [networking website](#)) belong to these exemplary measures as well as the implementation of a "Day of action" which took place at one of these university locations, the University of Greifswald, on the 17th of June 2006. The Citizens' Exhibition *Project Future—Families at University* was subsequently shown on this day of action. The day of action pursued four goals: positive positioning of the topic "family and university", networking of local inter-regional stakeholders, information and sensitisation of the policy makers and policy-making bodies. The Citizens' Exhibition directly served its first goal. It sought to make visible the topic of "studying and working at the university with children" and imbue it with a positive orientation. In addition, the exhibition was shown at the end of the project at the concluding conference on the 2nd of November 2006. [32]

The goal of providing positive coverage of the topic was also prevalent in the choice of text excerpts for the exhibition displays. Highly positive sentences from every single interview were to be found here as headings. They express the positive aspects of life with children in the form of excerpts such as "without children I would have been missing something in life", "you become more social with children", "during your studies is the best time to have children" or "my grades had a huge upswing". Portrait photos of the interviewees alone or with their families were shown on eight exhibition displays. They included students, academic co-workers or professors, and they gave accounts of their lives and their happiness with children, the relations between studies and work with the tasks of being a mother or a father and of their motivation for working while having children. The emphasis on the positive aspects was consciously chosen to provide a positive perspective to counter the common representation of children as a barrier to career or even as a poverty risk.

# Projekt Zukunft

## Familien an der Universität



**Valentin Funk, Student mit Lebensgefährtin**  
**1 Kind: Maximilian, 2 Jahre**

**Himmelhoch jauchzend – zu Tode betrübt**  
Jedes Kind ist etwas Besonderes, Eigenes und Unersetzbares. Besonders schön ist diese Freude, dieses Lachen und dieses Lebensfrohe. Aber das „himmelhoch jauchzend“ schlägt auch schnell um in „zu Tode betrübt“ und zwei Minuten später lacht das Kind wieder. Es ist diese Spanne, die das Leben spannend macht.

**Junge Eltern sind einfach lockerer**  
Ich bin begeistert davon, jung Vater zu sein. Meine Eltern haben auch studiert, als wir klein waren und das war toll. Junge Eltern sind einfach lockerer und nicht so ängstlich. Ich weiß auch nicht, ob die Hoffnungen, die sich viele machen, aufgehen: „erst mach ich mein Partyleben, dann meine Ausbildung, dann hab ich meine Anstellung, dann bauen wir ein Haus und sichern den sozialen Status ab und dann kommen die Kinder.“

**Mit Kind kann man genauso viel machen**  
Es gibt natürlich Momente, da wünscht man sich die Freiheit wieder. Manchmal sehnt man sich nach der Unkompliziertheit zurück. Aber eigentlich kann man mit Kind genauso viel machen, wenn man will. Das ist eher eine finanzielle Frage, denn der Komfort, den man braucht, um z.B. mit Kind entspannt reisen zu können, kostet natürlich und gleichzeitig mindern Kinder massiv die Einkünfte.

**Ich bin froh, das im Studium erleben zu dürfen**  
Sicher verzichten wir auf manches, aber die Entschädigung ist auch jeden Tag da, wenn man aufsteht und das Kind ist auch da. Ich bin froh, das im Studium erleben zu dürfen und nicht, wenn ich den ganzen Tag arbeiten muss und die Kinder nur so am Rande erlebe.

**nexus** **h<sup>2</sup>** **www.menschen-fuer-ostdeutschland.de** **UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG**  
Idee und Konzeption: Christine von Blanckenburg  
Texte: Christine von Blanckenburg  
Fotos: Sören Marotz und Harald Döhne  
Grafische Gestaltung: Elke Weiler  
Gefördert durch: **18** Bundesminister für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung

Figure 4: Exhibit from the Citizens' Exhibition *Project Future—Families at University* [33]

The critical aspects, those things that can make life with children at university difficult, were represented more strongly in the video portraits. The film portraits introduce another six students with children. They show excerpts from the interviews, but also scenes with their children or at the university. Here the impressions become more vital and multi-faceted because the interviewees elaborate on their positive experiences as students with children, but it also becomes clear what is still lacking at the universities that could facilitate study while raising children. In this way, a full picture of these people's living environment first emerges with the combination of both media forms. The family-friendly university as a catalyst for regional development is indeed far from the current reality; rather, it is a vision for the future. Currently, one out of four

studying mothers does not finish her studies and one out of three graduated mothers with children does not surmount the transition into professional life. The Citizens' Exhibition *Project Future—Families at University* opens a highly charged topic to public discussion. [34]

The example of this Citizens' Exhibition also shows how performative social research, through its accessible and communicative mode of interposing scientific processes and results, can reach people with their everyday problems and in their everyday context. [35]

### **3.3 Cross-national and bilingual: Citizens' Exhibitions *Historical City Centers in the Vortex of Globalization: Naples—Florence—Berlin***

The [Citizens' Exhibitions \*Historical City Centers in the Vortex of Globalization: Naples—Florence—Berlin\*](#) show that this method is able to take on and present a cross-national topic through the use of visual material and through the orientation on the everyday language of interview subjects in the form of quotations. The following presentation takes its orientation from LEGEWIE (2003), and ARCIDIACONO, LEGEWIE, MORDINI and DIENEL (2006). [36]

In recent years major European cities, with historical city centres that have often long stood abandoned, have experienced an economic boom through mass tourism and gentrification which has led to investments with rapidly rising profit and a radical transformation of the social structure. Other more peripheral historical residential quarters show, to the contrary, a regressive development: socio-economic decline with vacancy and emigration of the more economically well-off residents. [37]

From this background and between 2001 and 2002, the following research question arose for three research projects in the field of community psychology and historic city centres, namely historic quarters in Naples, Florence and Berlin: *What effects did the transformation process of recent years have—especially mass tourism and economic boom in historical residential areas—on the urban quality of life and the social structure of European cities?* [38]

Three projects emerged in the context of a practice-oriented university training in community psychology field and action research. In Naples the Ancient Center (*Centro Antico*) was the subject of the investigation, in Florence the Historical Center (*Centro Storico*), and in Berlin the historical quarter *Spandauer Vorstadt* and the Kollwitzplatz Quarter (*Kollwitzplatz-Viertel*). [39]

The project arose from (1) city psychology project courses at the Institute for Psychology in collaboration with the Center for Technology and Society at the Technische Universität Berlin (2) a guest semester by one of the authors (Heiner LEGEWIE) in the Psychology Department at the Università degli Studi in Florence (LEGEWIE 2001) and (3) a collaboration with Catarina ARCIDIACONO (Professor at the Università Federico II in Naples). The following task groups

were responsible for the jointly coordinated research projects and the Citizens' Exhibitions that emerged from them:

1. task group Naples: Caterina ARCIDIACONO with students of the Master's Program in Community Psychology at the Fondazione Mediterraneo (photos: Antonio ALFANO)
2. task group Florence: Heiner LEGEWIE and Maurizio MORDINI with students at the University of Florence (photos: Georg EICHINGER)
3. task group Berlin: Birgit Böhm and Heiner LEGEWIE with students in the Psychology Program at the Technische Universität Berlin (photos: Beate SCHLEIFER) [40]

In each of the three cities a series of Problem Centered Interviews with residents, trades people and experts was conducted about the following topics:

- origin, local identity and life goals of the interviewee
- meaning of cultural heritage for their own quality of life
- quality of life, problems and conflicts in their residential area
- manifestations of tourism and effects on quality of life
- ideas and initiatives for improvement of urban quality of life [41]

A total of 15 interviews were conducted in Naples, 40 in Florence and 71 in Berlin. The majority of interviewees were willing to allow publication of their interviews and allow to be portrayed in a photo-documentation in their living environment. [42]

The goal of the research projects was to investigate the subjective experiences, perceptions, critical points, desires and proposals of the interviewed residents in reference to the urban quality of life in the historical centres in light of the present changes. The analysis of the interviews was carried out with methods of qualitative data analysis, supported by the software system ATLAS.ti (MENZEL, 2002; WEYER & STREHL; 2003; ARCIDIACONO, 2004; NAU, 2004). [43]

At the same time the research material was used to prepare the results of the three studies in Citizens' Exhibitions for the participating cities. The exhibition about Naples was composed of 16 displays with pasted colour photographs and interview text. The exhibition about Florence (26 displays) and Berlin (23 displays) were, in contrast, realised in a digital black and white photo design with integrated interview text.



Figure 5: Comparison of the design of the Citizens' Exhibitions *Historical City Centers in the Vortex of Globalization: Naples—Florence—Berlin* [44]

By means of photo-documentation in combination with characteristic interview excerpts, the intention was for residents to have a say for themselves as stakeholders in their living environment. For this purpose, core statements from each of the fully transcribed interviews were assembled (montage technique) into an abridged text. The texts were selected according to their degree of representation for both interviewer and interviewee and in view of their role in the exhibition as a whole. It was important to document the multiplicity of perspectives and avoid repetition of identical statements. Each of the texts was given a representative title, the name, occupation and age of the interviewee (at the time of the interview) and a short biography. These texts were combined with photos of the interviewees to compose "residents' portraits".



Figure 6: Portrait from the Citizens' Exhibition *Historical City Centers in the Vortex of Globalization*, Waltraud B., 65 years old, master baker in the Spandauer Quarter in Berlin [45]

Through the multiplicity of voices and perspectives presented in the exhibitions, there is no uniform message—part of the residents evoke a nostalgic transfiguration of the "old neighbourhood milieu", part of them also express in

highly nuanced ways their acceptance of various aspects of the transformation that has taken place. [46]

The goal of the exhibitions was, through vivid and personal documentation of the various perceptions, (1) to vividly document the risks and opportunities of modernisation in their whole complexity from the perspective of the residents, (2) to deliver thought-provoking material about the preservation of urban quality of life and (3) to advance a cultural exchange among the three cities. [47]

The staging and effect of the Citizens' Exhibitions in each of the three cities was very different. [48]

The first exhibition took place in Naples in Autumn 2002 in a former refectory of the Church of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples' Centro Antico (photo-documentation online available at <http://www.euromedi.org/attivita/foto.asp?idevento=310>).



Figure 7: Postings and opening of the Citizens' Exhibition *Historical City Centers in the Vortex of Globalization* in the Ancient Center of Naples [49]

The preparation of the exhibition was carried out in the context of an action research project by the community psychology task group working with Caterina ARCIDIACONO with the involvement of numerous on-site grassroots citizens' groups. The opening of the exhibition included the involvement of local politicians and around 200 participants from a broad public. Around 30 grassroots citizens' groups introduced themselves with their action programs which, to mark the occasion of the exhibition, they had amalgamated into a network, *Cento per il centro* ["One hundred demands for the centre"] and after the closing of the Citizens' Exhibition, continued to work on the implementation of their demands. The exhibition and the action program also got attention in the local press. PROCENTESE (2006) produced a follow-up study about these activities one year after the exhibition (see discussion in Section 4). [50]

The following exhibitions could not be combined with a concomitant action research program including the participation of grassroots citizens' groups, as in Naples. In Florence the exhibition, which in the meantime had become three parts (Naples—Florence—Berlin), was prepared and shown in September 2003 in the

cloister of Ammannati in the historical city quarter of Santo Spirito, which was organised by the administration of the Centro Storico (one of 5 districts in the city of Florence) in cooperation with the Center for Technology and Society at the Technische Universität Berlin and the Fondazione Mediterraneo Naples. The exhibition opening was joined with a symposium about the problems of city development in Florence and a banquet to which the relatively sparse participating citizens were invited. In Berlin the plan to present the exhibition on-site (Kulturbrauerei in the Kollwitzplatz Quarter), remained unrealised for financial reasons. Instead the exhibition, prepared by the Center for Technology and Society, the Italian Culture Institute and the Gallery of the Willy-Brandt-Haus, was shown at a central location in the inner courtyard of the Willy-Brandt-Haus between November and December of 2003. The opening event drew around 150 visitors and a notable media response thanks to, among other things, intensive press work and an opening speech by the Speaker of the Parliament at the time, Dr. Wolfgang THIERSE, who by coincidence was one of the interviewed residents of the Kollwitzplatz-Viertel. [51]

It must be noted critically that the exhibitions in Florence and Berlin, for various reasons, did not fulfil all of the points of Citizens' Exhibition's goals. They did not, like to the Citizens' Exhibition in Naples, reach a comparably extensive public discourse about the topic of the exhibition. The comparison of cities shows how much the effect of a Citizens' Exhibition depends on the context and the process of concomitant initiatives. [52]

#### **4. Vision and Evaluation of the Citizens' Exhibition**

The method of the Citizens' Exhibition emerged from the context of qualitative socio-scientific research; it is, however, an interdisciplinary method because it unifies concepts of multiple disciplines in its approach. It is not a completely new practice; its innovation rather lies in the interposition into social science of concepts from cultural science, political science, architecture, pedagogy and exhibition pedagogy. The Citizens' Exhibition combines qualitative methods of social and action research with participative methods, photography, exhibition-design, -didactics and -dramaturgy. [53]

The point of origin and roots of the Citizens' Exhibition lie in qualitative social research. In a Citizens' Exhibition, the data are not only compiled with methods of qualitative social research such as the Problem Centered Interview (WITZEL, 1985, 2000), Grounded Theory (STRAUSS, & CORBIN), and Qualitative Content Analysis (MAYRING, 1993, 2000). The Citizens' Exhibition is also focused on problems from people's everyday world such as life in a tourist-oriented residential quarter or studying at university while raising children, with its interest in the subjective perspective of individuals and in the reconstruction of social reality in the tradition of classical qualitative research styles such as ethnomethodology, constructivism and symbolic interactionism. [54]

The Citizens' Exhibition obtains its performative character through combination with photography, with the principles of exhibition design, through application of

dramaturgical elements in the staging of the exhibition opening, and through didactic means in the presentation of information, and in interaction with participants.

"Whoever talks about the performative today is part of a discourse which is being established in social science and which merges the terms 'performative' and 'performance' as derived from linguistics, the art and theatre studies sense of the term 'performance', and the recently applied term from gender research, 'performativity'. Common to all of these terms is the fact that, less than what lies deeper or behind, it is concerned with the phenomenal events; less than the structure and the functions, it is concerned with the process; less than the text or symbol, it is concerned with the construction of reality" (WULF & ZIRFAS, 2007, p.10, translation by the authors) [55]

In this definition, the various aspects of the performative are addressed. One of these is the aspect of presentation in the sense of a "performance", an artistic one, a scene, the staging of content. Another is the aspect of focus on process, on construction of reality, which addresses acting upon and changing reality. The Citizens' Exhibition, too, combines these various aspects of the performative. [56]

The Citizens' Exhibition is performative in that it makes use of other methods of presenting results than are typically applied in the social sciences. It transcends the presentation of research results in the form of Power Point presentations at lectures or in the form of academic articles. The presentation of photos and texts on exhibition displays and of videos, the exhibition opening as a carefully staged event; these are "performance" in a true sense, as in a theatre production. This staging is a ritual that conveys the content and lends it special meaning through context. This "performance" is an important aspect of the method. The Citizens' Exhibition, however, is also about the performative in the sense of an accentuation of the process and the construction of reality. The aspect of the Citizens' Exhibition's intention to act upon and change something is evident through its reformist and participative demand. The participating stakeholders' action is thus not only scientific and artistic, but also political action in the form of participation in political decisions in the sense of a—supposed—common welfare. [57]

The Citizens' Exhibition links to the tradition of action research, to not only research the processes, but to also seek to initiate changes and provide a contribution to reforms in social contexts such as businesses or residential quarters (HINTE & KARRAS, 1989). In this tradition, Citizens' Exhibitions are an example for practice-orientation and active social research. Another intention always followed in its application is the initiation of a process of communication about a problem, the stimulation of interaction between various interest groups and political decision makers, and the contribution of development and solutions. With this aim, the Citizens' Exhibition transcends the aim of describing and understanding social reality, which is usually associated with qualitative social research. [58]

Alongside the Citizens' Exhibition's reformist aim, the participative approach which accompanies it also becomes apparent, which in this method places central importance on the performative in the sense of an orientation toward process and action. The emergence of the Citizens' Exhibition in the 1990s was embedded in the increasing establishment of participation practices. In the context of the discussion about sustainable development and the solution for global problems, a wide range of new participation practices for large groups (KÖNIGSWIESER & KEIL, 2000) was developed. These practices, for example the Citizens' Jury (DIENEL, 1997), Open Space Technology (OWEN, 1997) or Planning for Real (NIF, 1995) are text-oriented and employ visual elements only in the form of cards that visualise textual results or in the form of technical models. The results of these practices are generally only reported back to the participants and the sponsors and find little public response. The Citizens' Exhibition as a participation method transcends these approaches in that it combines textual and visual elements and enables a reporting of the results to the public and the construction of a continuing dialogue among the participants. [59]

The effects of the Citizens' Exhibition's method are multifaceted. The Citizens' Exhibition creates a space for dialogue and, through its combination of lingual and visual or audio-visual appeal, facilitates mutual understanding. Through the presentation of its cognitive, emotional and participative components it supports empowerment processes (RAPPAPORT, 1995, p.802). These processes are also conveyed to the participants through offering different roles: the interview subjects are empowered to express their own perspectives, to symbolise them photographically, to present them publicly and to represent them in a dialogue with politicians. For the scientists the method offers a new access to the field which not only means access to data for their research, but through the exhibition also provides a platform for publicly effective presentation of research results in a way that is relevant to their practice and reaches not only the academic world but also the research subjects themselves. They experience the research subjects as participants in the process of the Citizens' Exhibition and thus as practically and concretely involved agents and not only narrators. For the photographers the Citizens' Exhibition offers an opportunity to become active in the research themselves and to join aesthetic, documentary and artistic elements. A further effect is gained from the public efficacy of the Citizens' Exhibition. It outwardly conveys the topics and the concerns of the participating interest groups and thereby increases their opportunities for change. [60]

Even though numerous Citizens' Exhibitions have been mounted in the last ten years and the format has, therefore, become increasingly established, there has to date been only one evaluation study. PROCENTESE (2006) contributed a follow-up study and evaluation of two action research projects included in the production of the Citizens' Exhibition in the Campi Flegrei and the Ancient Center of Naples. [61]

The Citizens' Exhibition *Urban Catalysts—Strategies for Temporary Uses* was produced in the context of a project about temporary uses for areas in the Campi Flegrei (Gulf of Naples) in Italy (PROCENTESE, 2001, for Project Urban Catalysts

cp. MISSELWITZ, OSWALT & OVERMEYER, 2007). The follow-up study took place five months after the opening on the basis of semi-structured interviews with nine of the stakeholders involved in the exhibition. After the exhibition, the Citizens' Exhibition could not attain a mid-term effect. Indeed, some actions were initiated by the local administration, but the dialogue with citizens was not continued and the participants resigned. The Citizens' Exhibition was seen as an isolated occurrence. No self-organising communication process arose between the interest groups. [62]

The Citizens' Exhibition *Historical City Centers in the Vortex of Globalization: Naples—Florence—Berlin* (see Section 3.3) was part of a community psychology action research project about the Historical Center of Naples (ARCIDIACONO, 2004; ARCIDIACONO & PROCENTESE, 2005). After one year, there was a follow-up study performed with the help of five focus groups with a total of 15 stakeholders involved in the exhibition and five interviews with key players and residents in the Ancient Center. [63]

This exhibition in Naples had a long-term effect. For over a year, meetings were organised between representatives of the interest groups, a workshop was led and an action committee was formed from members of the local government, citizens, interview subjects, researchers and participants from other institutions. Commonly formulated measures for the development of the Ancient Center such as improvement of public safety were published in a report and started in process. [64]

In her study, PROCENTESE (2006) deduces a range of conducive and obstructive factors for the participation process in the context of a Citizens' Exhibition. The study is centered on the question of how much progress can be made through a Citizens' Exhibition towards the goal of empowering citizens and establishing an active role for them in the local community. Among the factors identified as conducive were visualisation, exchange, response and information. Among the obstructive factors were information deficits and a discontinuous, long-lasting research process with few action-promoting and financial means. On the basis of these evaluation results, it became clear that the Citizens' Exhibition must be embedded in a continual, activating research process in order to be successful as a participation instrument. [65]

The results of the evaluation study correspond with SCHOPHAUS (2001), who had already made mention of the limitations of the Citizens' Exhibition. Accordingly, the method can indeed communicate the necessity of a continuation of decision-making power or of protest, but cannot replace it. It can clarify positions, initiate a dialogue and contribute mutual understanding. The continuation of the dialogue, however, requires additional activities such as organisation of workshops or meetings, a regular information exchange, and the establishment of an initiative group for the supervision of the participative process and the implementation of its results. Which practices should be installed in the Citizens' Exhibition must be decided from case to case and requires further research. Factors that strengthen a long-term participation effect should be paid

special attention in the future implementation of Citizens' Exhibitions in research projects. [66]

Expanded participation for the interview subjects in the production of the Citizens' Exhibition is another aspect that could be developed. The interview subjects should themselves more frequently take the camera and be supported in doing this, for example through training in usage of the technology, e.g. a photography workshop. Through such a transfer of the role of photographer, the Citizens' Exhibition could become not only an exhibition *about* but also *by* citizens, and thus their own work. [67]

Finally, the Citizens' Exhibition should be more boldly experimented with in artistic and aesthetic terms. Not only films, but also other forms of presentation such as sculpture, collage and installation, as well as role playing, sketches and performances are conceivable. How much involvement professional artists would have—alone or in collaboration with the citizens—should be decided according to the interest level of the participants and the configuration of the project. [68]

The difficulty of being recognised in the scientific community as a social researcher with an exhibition concept should be mentioned here. Especially in Germany, the community is still shaped by the idea of classical academic presentation of scientific results. Performative, artistic and aesthetic approaches have still not been adequately implemented in the field of social science in Germany. The cause for this could still be existing academic scepticism about action research approaches (cp. VON UNGER, BLOCK & WRIGHT, 2007) which after a boom in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s in Germany, have been rarely followed and publicised and have in recent years been taken for granted by sponsors in applied social research. [69]

Overall, we see strong possibilities for the Citizens' Exhibition to be successfully advanced as a performative socio-scientific method through strengthening of its participative components, embedding it in a long-term action research approach, and through creative enhancement in additional aesthetic and artistic forms. [70]

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