

How citizens perceive the sustainability activities of regional enterprises: a regional case study in rural Germany

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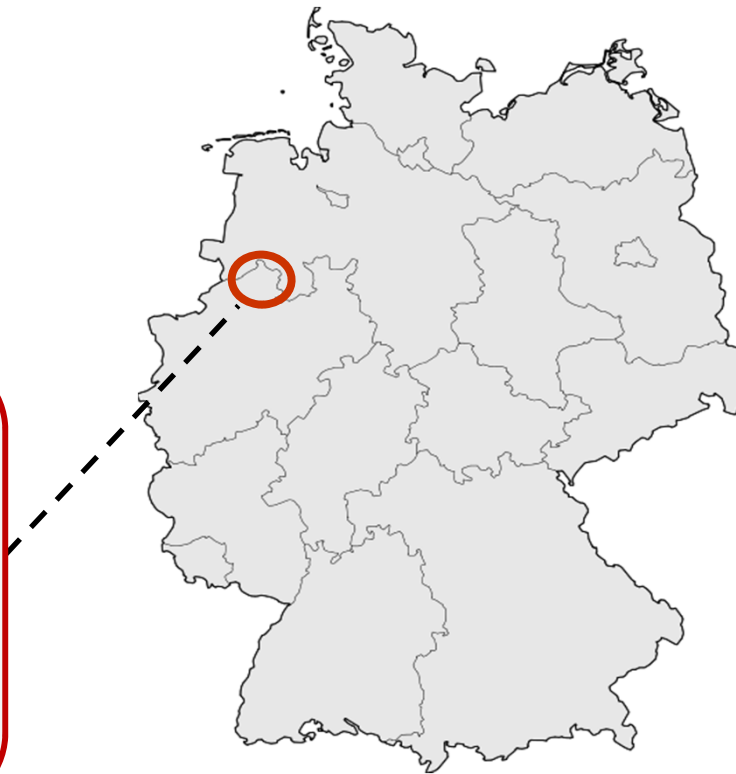
Regional case study



Kreis Steinfurt 

(437,000 residents)

North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany



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I. Background



- The topic of ‘*Corporate Citizenship*’ is of huge relevance for sustainable development: enterprises – as influential participants in the public area – have to contribute to the public interest and provide perspectives to regional challenges.
- Enterprises in rural areas suffer from shrinking populations and the migration of qualified employees.
- Sustainability engagement may help to attract and hold employees despite the structural problems of rural areas.
- Literature suggests that sustainability activities focussed locally have a greater impact.
- There is hardly any empirical research about the perceptions of local residents in Germany.

II. Research questions



How do citizens in rural areas perceive the social and ecological activities of regional enterprises?

- What do citizens associate with the social and ecological engagement of enterprises in their living area?
- How do citizens evaluate particular activities in terms of personal relevance?
- How informed are citizens about the social and ecological engagement of regional enterprises?
- How informed would they like to be about the social and ecological engagement of regional enterprises?
- How and in which dimension do citizens want enterprises to implement a regional focus and to assume responsibility for the local community?

III. Method: Explorative survey



- Enquiry period: between Sept. and Nov. 2016
- Practical conduct: *SOKO Institute* (Bielefeld)
- Target group: all adult citizens of Steinfurt (North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany)
- Sampling method: *Random-Route-Procedure*
- Interview method: Computer Assisted Personal or Telephone Interviews (*CAPI/ CATI*)
- Duration: 15-20 min

→ **Result: 1,003 usable interviews**

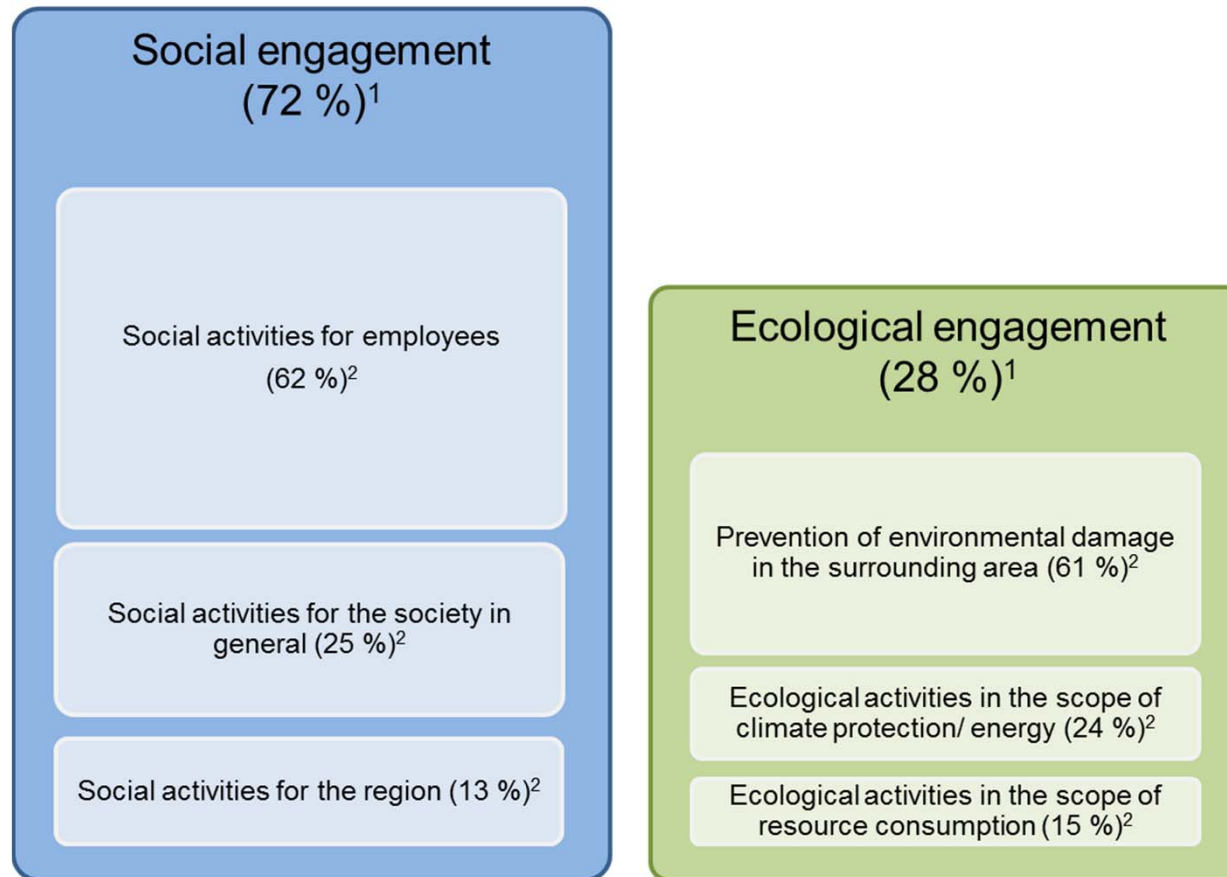
Data weighting according to age and gender

Attribute	Manifestation	Distribution
Gender	female	51 %
	male	49 %
Age Group	16-34 years	24 %
	35-49 years	24 %
	50-64 years	28 %
	65+ years	25 %
Educational Level	No leaving qualification / Basic secondary school leaving qualification (from a Hauptschule)	25 %
	Secondary school leaving qualification (from a Realschule) / Certificate of aptitude for specialized higher education	47 %
	University entrance qualification / A-levels	28 %

IV. Selected Results – Relevance of social and ecological engagement



Prioritization of social and ecological activities



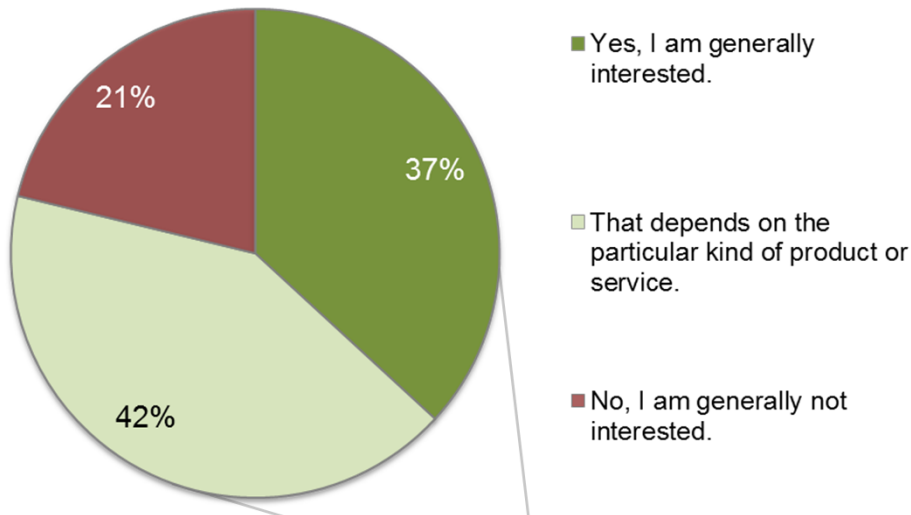
1 "If you compare directly the social with the ecological sector – in which do you find it more important that enterprises spring into action?" [n=921]

2 "Which of the mentioned activities is the most relevant to you by comparison?" [n=951-972]

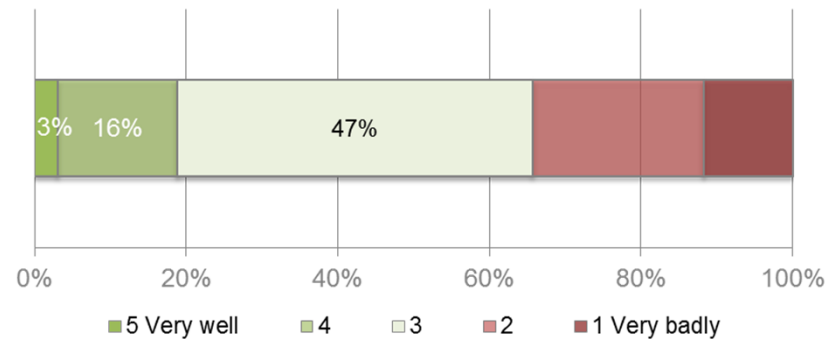
IV. Selected Results – Information level and interest



To what extent are you interested in information about social and ecological activities of local enterprises? [n=991]



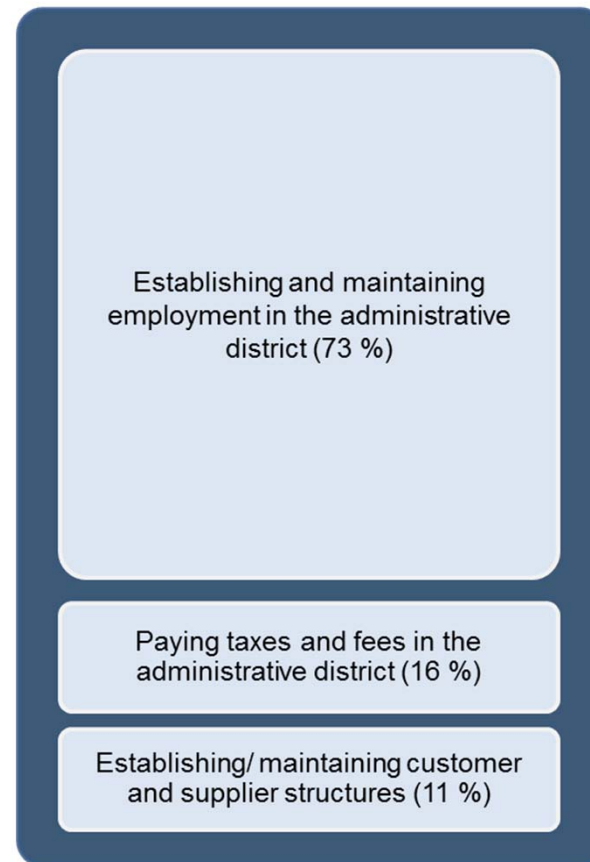
How well do you feel informed about the social and ecological engagement of enterprises in the region? [N=775]



IV. Results – Regional focus of entrepreneurial activities



Prioritization of entrepreneurial activities in the region¹ [N=966]



¹ "How important is it for you that enterprises do the following in the district?"

V. Conclusions



Interviewed citizens show a lack of information about sustainability activities.

- Communication has to be more targeted and has to reduce the complexity of the topic.

Activities for employees and the prevention of environmental damage in the surrounding area are considered very relevant among a majority of the interviewees.

- Direct proximity of activities is crucial for citizen' perception: personal concern must be seen as a core factor for evaluations of sustainability activities.

Citizens see the main regional responsibility of enterprises to be their role as employers.

- This may be an interesting anchor point for developing related sustainability activities that meet peoples' personal concerns.



Thank you for your
attention!

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