

Collective governance, innovation and creativity in the face of climate change (SELFCITY)

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Project Summary:

SELFCITY will explore the processes of self-organisation that underpin community-led project-based responses to climate change in three countries across Europe. Self-organising is one of the three inter-linked processes (along with market-led and state-led mechanisms) that will underpin any pragmatic and innovative transition to an adapted urban environment that is closer to being carbon neutral and that may be resilient in the face of changing (climate-induced) weather patterns. Whereas there has been work on market-led and on state-led initiatives, we understand less well the ways in which civil society constructs sometimes alternative and sometimes complementary ways of addressing climate change.

Building on existing research on adapting the built environment, urban neighbourhoods and facilitating energy transition, the project will combine social researcher-led work with participant action research to explore, record and enhance the ways community activists are organizing innovative, creative and pragmatic climate change responses in their communities (of place and of space). It will set out how the problem(s) of climate change are conceptualized both by these activists/practitioners and by the community members they work with. The project will create space for activists to identify capacity-building needs and for the research team to work with activists to fill these needs. Through these reflexive activities both academic and practitioners team will tease out the tensions and potentials of the inter-relation of everyday knowledge and technical knowledge on climate challenge responses. Not only does this project analyse the tensions in these forms of knowledge creation within a given national context, but it uses the device of cross-national comparison to help participants break out of culturally implicit (and fixed) constructions of both the climate change problem and the opportunities for change.