

Description: The “smart city” strategy has now become a global trend. Its implementation, however, requires technical, economic and social innovations. In particular, the development of smart technologies usually requires cooperation between municipal actors, universities and private research institutions. This project tries to link different stakeholders together and promote the smart city strategy in Bavarian cities. To be more specific, the goal of this proposed project is to develop strategies to foster social cohesion in Bavarian cities under the smart city framework. Social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society¹, and has been at the center of debates on democracy, the future of technology and industry, diversity, heritage, migration, social and economic transformation, environmental and resource conflicts, digital spaces, health and much more.

Students’ task: Pioneer smart cities around the world have developed a high level of experience regarding the development of smart city strategies. A comparative analysis between these well-known examples and Bavarian cities, in particular, from the perspective of social cohesion, would help to identify problems that hinder the development of Bavaria’s smart city strategy as well as opportunities for the latter. A direct discussion with municipal officials who are responsible in this area is encouraged. As a result, the international comparison and discussions with stakeholders will help identify a practical and specific problem that students would like to and are able to solve. In the next step, students will tackle the proposed problem using an interdisciplinary approach using behavioral science, social governance, and digital technology. In this case, teams should ideally combine some technical expertise with interests in governance and social science.

Possible project ideas: The general goal is helping to foster a sense of community among residents in the city and to care about the city using smart city tools and architectures. Possible ideas include nudging people towards more social and sustainable behavior in the city context such as improving children’s education, traffic conditions, energy savings, fee/tax payments and recycling. Students are also encouraged to explore the use of big data which is a foundation of many smart city strategies with the objective to seek possibilities for personalized nudging.

Kind of solutions that the students could come up with: Recently, there is a trend of integrating nudging to the smart city strategy to influence people’s behavior. Students are expected to develop certain (nudging) approaches to foster social cohesion and to increase personal social responsibility in Bavarian cities.

¹ Manca A.R. (2014) Social Cohesion. In: Michalos A.C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2739

Background information: The smart city strategy aims at making city infrastructure and services more intelligent, interconnected, efficient and socially inclusive. This is in line with the topic of the Science Hack 2021 “Sustainable & Inclusive Cities after the Pandemic”, and could thus contribute to shaping and developing the cities of the future. For instance, the EU’s Horizon 2020 program intends to make the European Union more competitive on a global level through promoting the development of European cities into smart cities. It is important to note that Bavaria also launched the model project “Smart Cities Smart Regions – Kommunale für Städtebau und Mobilität der Zukunft (<https://www.smartcitiesmartregions.bayern.de/>). Compared to the pioneer cities such as Barcelona, Amsterdam and Boston, however, Bavarian smart city approaches are less known and not well-studied.

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