

Christine Ax (Institute for Sustainable Economic Development)

Parallel Session V: Regional Aspects

Chair: **Roland Arbter** (Federal Chancellery)

Rapporteur: **Christine Ax** (Institute for Sustainable Economic Development, Germany)



Andrew DAVIES (OECD)

Europe is facing important challenges – financial crisis, climate change. Regions need to show that they are relevant to solve those problems. “Do regions matter?” is a question with a long history and not yet answered. Local knowledge, motivation and experimentation also seem to be important; Cities and regions have competencies in key areas for climate change (land use zoning, natural resources management, transportation, building, water and waste). Cities and regions are laboratories of innovative climate policies – which can be scaled up to national programmes. The focus of regional policies on the OECD level will be less on disparities and more on sustainability, innovation and better governance.

Robert LUKESCH (ÖAR Regionalberatung GmbH)

Regional Resilience is the capacity of a region to absorb endogenous or exogenous disturbances in a way that its structures, functions and relationships being essential for its prosperousness remain intact. In recent years the term „resilience“ is spreading across various disciplines, from cybernetics to ecology, psychology, business development and social sciences. Researchers related to the „Building Resilient Regions Network“ (<http://brr.berkeley.edu>) have published a host of very inspiring articles and books most of which are genuinely cross-disciplinary. Resilience is a feature of sustainability. Adaptability is the capacity of actors in a system to influence resilience (= the capacity to manage resilience).

Transformability is the capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social (including political conditions) make the system untenable.

Christian Steiner (Office of the Lower Austrian Government, department of rural development)

Land husbandry and cultivated landscape are connected inseparably! Example Moststraße: This region provides a distinctive countryside and distinctive products. Therefore we deal with a distinctive region. The rural community is the centre of life. A sound local supply and basic services as well as an efficient infrastructure are important requirements for communities with a high quality of life.

In order to maintain rural areas (small) urban centres are also needed within the region. It is not only provincial and regional capitals which provide impulses, small regional centres do this too.

Sustainable regions are characterised by a high degree of autonomy, diversity and polarisation.

Examples: Pielachtal / Dirndltal; Mostviertel / Moststraße; Wachau / Weinstraße

Mag. Reinhard Troper (City of Vienna)

Give cities the attention they deserve! All our main challenges are focused in the urban areas. There they will be mastered, or we will fail to solve those problems.

According to the federal constitution and the division of competences between the federal, regional and local level - at least in Austria - in many important fields, regional policy is a niche policy. But within this framework and under the given financial limitations, the regional level can add or emphasize special topics. Regions matter if they focus activities, coordinate the efforts, involve the social partners and local stakeholders and follow an integrated approach.

In the future functional urban areas will get more and more important. Administrative borders will lose importance.