

“Urban development - Pathway to a sustainable green city”

Report of the panel Thessaloniki, 29th June 2012
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Urban development is a core issue of Green policy in cities. Greens are elected into several city governments where they have the responsibility for urban planning, e.g. Vienna. Contentwise the big challenge for Greens in the policy of urban development is to **close the gap between sustainability and modernism** and to put into practice **direct involvement of citizens** in planning processes.

Urban development has already been an important topic at the local councillors network meetings on EGP level, the Greens in Big Cities meeting in Vienna 2007 and the workshop „Women in urban planning“ in Berlin 2011.

The panel in Thessaloniki consisted of the following speakers:

Konstantinos Zervas, *deputy mayor of Environment, Life Quality and Free Spaces of Thessaloniki*, gave an overview of urban planning in Thessaloniki and the effort to establish sustainability as priority of urban development (partnerships, planting of 5,400 new trees in the city, re-generation of the waterfront, reduction of the use of private cars, creation of municipal vegetable gardens, etc.).

Christos Doulkeridis, *member of Brussels Regional government for Ecolo and in charge of housing*, has Greek parents and talked about citizens' involvement in planning processes. All new houses shall have passive standards, there are subsidies for insulation of buildings, and Greens want to increase the share of council flats from 10 to 15%.

Lambros Bouklis, *regional councillor in the Peloponnese region* (he spoke instead of Philippos Dragoumis) and consultant for over 200 projects, gave a lively speech about Green visions and possibilities in realizing green political aims. He analysed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and presented solutions (a green, corruption-free country, citizens' participation, benchmarking, Green programmes, awards).

Outi Silverberg, *Executive director of Helsinki Greens*, gave an overview of urban development in Helsinki and what the Greens in Helsinki already achieved. As features of sustainable cities she mentioned a dense city structure, the efficient use of energy, low segregation, open green and public spaces, transparent decision-making and a strong public sector (open for new service models).

Mar Garcia, *advisor of the Green Group in the Barcelona city council*, spoke about strategies and programmes that were put into practice during the green government involvement in Barcelona. The first free election in Barcelona took place just in 1979, so the democratic tradition is relatively young. In 2011, for the first time a right-wing city government came into power in Barcelona – although the Greens (ICV) scored over 10% of the vote. Crisis and austerity politics cause increasing social problems. 4 Green key elements for governing are economy, equality, ecology and freedom.

Finally, **Oliver Schrouffenege**, *former city councillor and today member of the administration in one urban district in Berlin*, raised some fundamental questions about green strategies in urban planning and citizens involvement. He stated that Greens often lost public plebiscites when they were in (local) government and that positive visions rather than restrictions are needed.

The aim of the panel was to exchange best practice and experience and to share a common vision of green urban development. The EGP website [„www.greensuccesses.eu“](http://www.greensuccesses.eu) should be better used for exchanging green successes in cities in the future. Sustainability and citizens participation were identified as core issues of green urban development. Corruption was named as one of the main problems in Greece, as well as the effects of the EU-restrictions in terms of budgetary cuts. It was noted that involving more women in planning might contribute to making the cities a better place.