



Innovative use of local renewable energy potential

Findings from a package of activities in a peripheral rural region in Austria

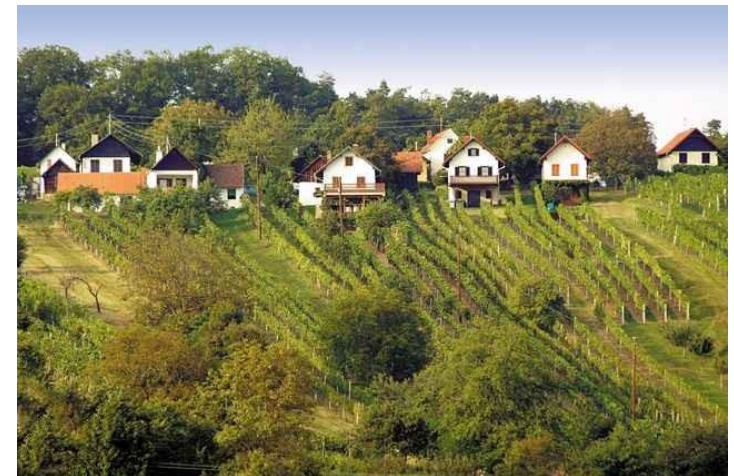
RSA-Conference, 24 -26 May 2010 in Pecs, Hungary

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Contents

- Regional development policy in Austria
- Characteristics of rural areas in Austria
- Strategic approaches and new policy priorities for peripheral rural areas
- Peripheral rural areas in South-East Austria
- Case of energy self-sufficient town Güssing
- Conclusions



Regional development policy in Austria I

Endogenous regional development in peripheral rural areas (since 1980s):

- Targeted measures to enhance local and regional initiatives
- Develop innovative ideas/ projects
- stimulate business foundation in the regions

→ Shift from problem-solving to a potential-oriented approach

Classical regional policy:

- Business investment support
- Promotion of enterprise settlement
- Infrastructural investments



Regional development policy in Austria II

1990s: A new geopolitical order

- Breakdown of communism (1989)
- Fall of the „iron curtain“ (1989)
- Accession of Austria to the EU (1995)

Technology- and innovation-oriented regional policy:

- Technology-centres in the regions
- Efforts to build new economic relations with neighbour countries after the long time of isolation



Rural areas in Austria

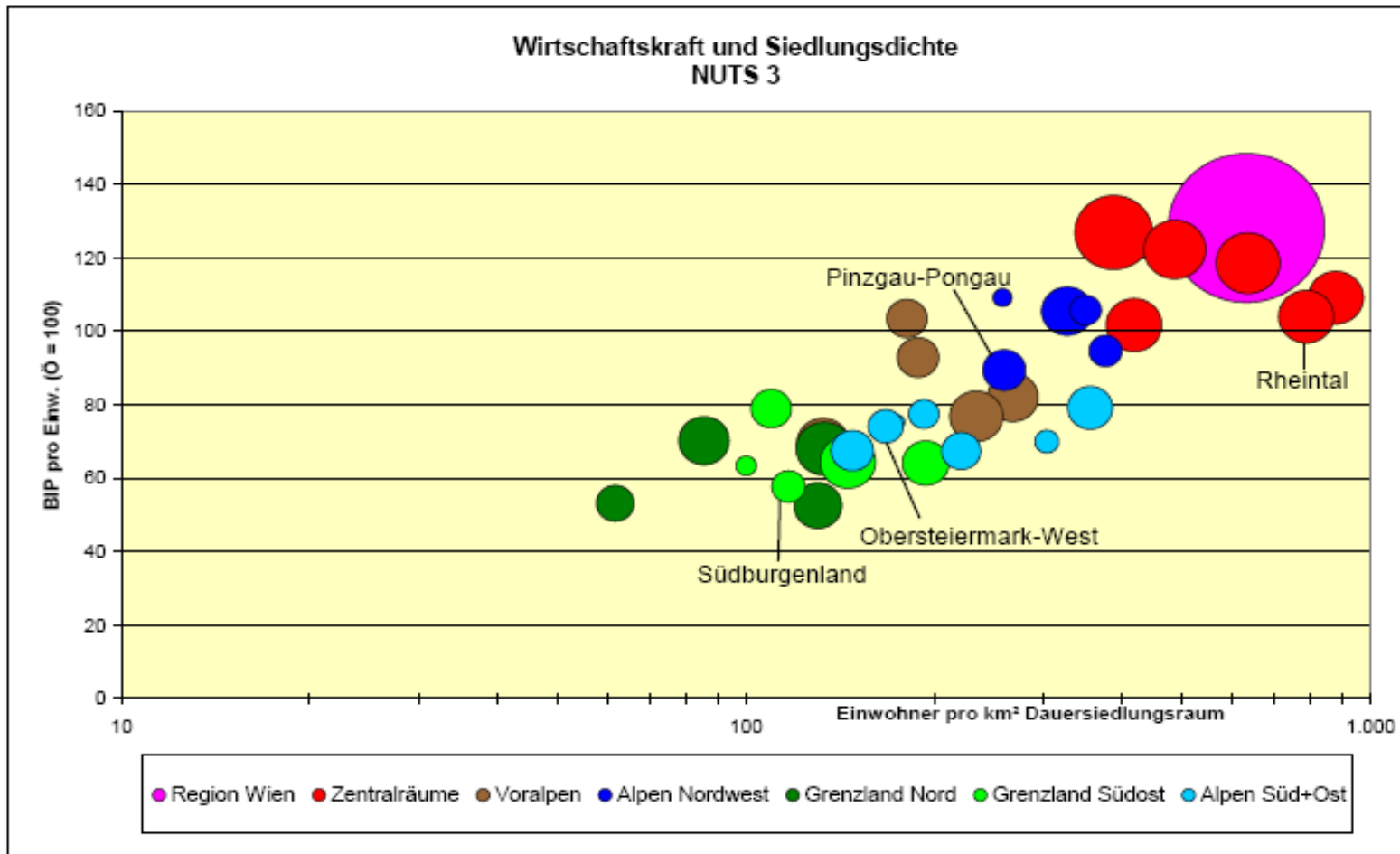
Different types of rural regions:

- Rural areas in urbanized regions
- Rural regions characterised by intensive tourism
- Peripheral rural regions
 - low economic productivity
 - shrinking population numbers
 - high commuting rates

→ Findings from the ÖROK-project „New Opportunities for peripheral rural areas“ (2007-2009)



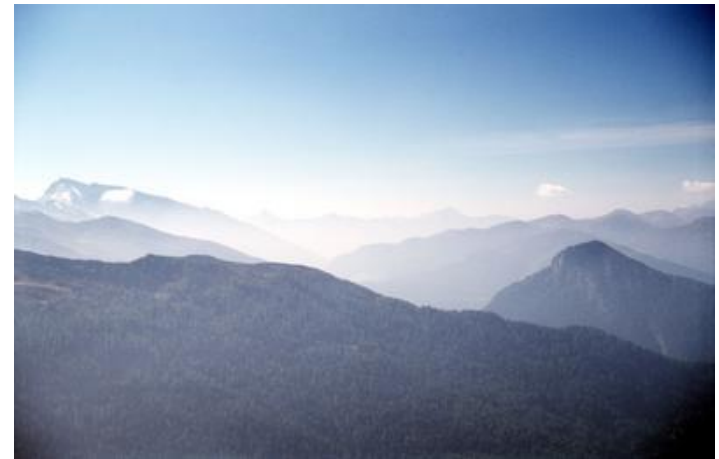
Economic performance of Austrian NUTS 3



Source: Huber 2008

New priorities for peripheral rural areas

- Social diversity
 - Richness of social structures –
 - Developing the creativity and innovation potential
 - Empowering of different social groups
- Intercommunal and urban-rural cooperation
 - Bundle their strengths
 - Take advantage of cooperation potential
 - Cooperation between regional centres and rural surroundings
- Land use and shaping of cultural landscapes
 - Discussion of natural resources
 - Specific potential as tourism areas



Peripheral rural Southern Burgenland

- Suffering under long isolation at the closed border to former communistic neighbour countries
 - Out-migration for many decades
 - GDP very low: 1980 – 58%
2009 – 67%
 - Limited employment offer
 - Shrinking population figures
 - Extremely high commuting rates and long distances
- Catching-up process after opening of the border, Objective1 funding, regional priority on technology and tourism



Cooperation with neighbour regions/ countries

- Future Region South-East
 - Austrian Southern Provinces
 - Border regions of Hungary, Slovenia and Italy
- CENTROPE
 - Capitals Vienna, Bratislava
 - City areas Győr and Brno and surrounding regions
- EU Regio West/ Nyugat Pannonia
 - Burgenland
 - Győr-Moson-Sopron, Zala, Vas
- ESPAN (Energy Strategy for Pannonia)

CENTROPE



Güssing – leaving behind the „negative spiral“

Marginalized region until 1990s:

- Persisting out-migration
- Scarcity of jobs
- Long distance commuting to Vienna (150 km) and Graz
- Land abandonment
- Substantial capital outflow for energy from outside

Leaving behind the „negative spiral“:

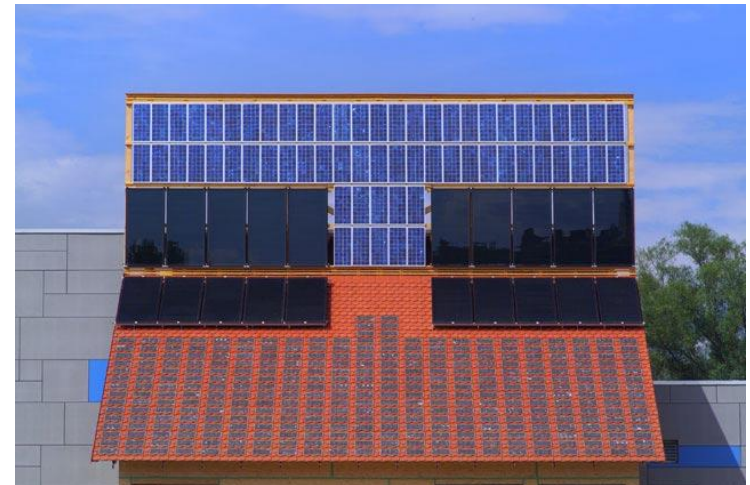
Adoption of a new energy concept for the town Güssing in 1990 to decrease energy dependency.



Energy-self-sufficiency as development concept

Steps to energy-self-sufficiency:

- Evaluation of Energy consumption patterns
 - Application of energy saving practices (thermal insulation of public buildings)
 - District heating plant fired with wood chips (40% of private households, 95% public buildings, enterprises)
 - Further investments in the construction of prototypes and demonstration power plants
- Aim – 100% replacement of fossil energy use for heating, power generation and transport fuels by alternative energy produced in the region.



Cross-sectoral interactions and synergies

Achievements:

- Settlement of enterprises (50 new enterprises, 1,000 direct and indirect jobs)
- European Centre for Renewable Energy (EEE) (1996)
- RENET: Renewable Energy Network Austria (1999)
- Center for Technology in Güssing
- ECRE Güssing International AG (2008)
- 30 demonstration plants in the district of Güssing
- Training courses for solarteurs in Güssing
- Technicum – a research institute

Further sectors involved:

- Agriculture and forestry
- Eco-energy tourism
- Sport events – “Run in the sun marathon”
- Cultural events



Conclusions

- Güssing is a model for the shift from a problem-solving to a potential-oriented approach in regional policy.
- Stakeholders used the window of opportunities in the 1990s to get Objective 1-funding for a technology strategy and to use the renewable energy resources in the region.
- Export of the energy-self-sufficient knowledge to other regions in Europe.
- Challenges of climate change mitigation open doors for the use of renewable resources (wind, biomass, solar energy) in rural areas and innovative regional development processes.

