

## **REPORT OF THE SECOND WORKSHOP OF THE RSA RESEARCH NETWORK ON 'ECOLOGICAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT', HULL, UK, 16-17 MAY 2011**

The second workshop of the RSA Research Network on 'Ecological Regional Development' was held at the University of Hull, UK. According to the workshop concept there were two parts: one offered topical papers on the whole theme and the other one discussed a special question.

Referring to the special question the first workshop in Dresden had aimed at creating a common understanding of ecological regional development. Building on this initial meeting, the second workshop addressed the aspect of implementation: what could or should be done to achieve such a development – taking into account that the capacity for policy-making is limited? In detail the following questions related to urban and regional development were discussed on the bases of prepared statements by all participants:

- Which environmental problems should be tackled?
- Tackling the causes of environmental degradation and/or adapting to it?
- What should ecological regional development materially look like?
- How to steer towards ecological regional development in a market economy?
- How to design structures and processes in the political and planning system?
- How to change awareness, values and society?

It had been clear beforehand that the more than 20 participants from 7 countries would not agree unanimously on the answers. However, the expressed and most interesting ideas, thoughts and proposals showed a very wide range. On the one hand this is proof for the extreme complexity of a theme combining two issues which are both cross-cutting issues: space and environment. On the other hand the result of the discussion shows how far apart are academics and scientists in the field of ecological urban and regional development in agreeing on consistent and comprehensive policy advice. Much more work has to be done.

In this sense the paper sessions provided an opportunity to debate and explore these areas of contention, e.g. environmental economic geography, the consequences of climate change, the role of spatial planning, soft instruments like "nudging", the protection of soil and biodiversity, environmental governance and ecological development of old industrial regions.

The next workshop will be held at the University of Luxembourg and builds on the two previous workshops. The aim is to ask about the most important questions for future research and ways to effectively organise and coordinate research based on the division of labour.

*The Organisers of the workshop in Hull were: Prof. David Gibbs, Department of Geography, University of Hull, UK; Prof. Bernhard Müller and Dr Gerd Lintz, Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Dresden, Germany*

(Next page: two photographs of the workshop)

