

Event report of the MedBReD research network

Second workshop on “Local authorities and economic development”, 26th September 2009, Athens, Greece

The second workshop of the Mediterranean and Balkan Regional Development research network took place in Athens and it was hosted by the Department of Geography at Harokopio University. The intention was to discuss the role of local authorities, especially those in small cities and rural areas, in promoting local economic development. Local authorities in the EU are regarded as central pillars of the local economy. However, research shows that in some areas local government is actively involved in shaping local agendas and policy making processes, while in other EU areas local government faces problems when attempting to intervene and assist the local economic atmosphere.

Around 15 people from Serbia, UK, Greece, Slovenia and Albania attended the workshop. The workshop started with a short salutation from Prof. Costis Hadjimichalis, who provided the presenters with useful comments during the workshop. In general, the case studies presented questioned the role of local authorities especially in the peripheral areas of the Balkans. Many of the papers discussed were questioning the ways that local governance affects the local civil society and some papers emphasized on the clientilistic relations that have been developed in small cities and rural areas. These clientilist relations have negative impact on the local social capital and limit the opportunities that could boost local economies. Other presentations elaborated the EU Cohesion Policy and its impact on local economies and also the role of globalization in transforming the ways that local authorities plan for development.

That second workshop gave the opportunity to the members of the MedBReD research network to meet once more and discuss the network’s research agenda. Furthermore, it gave the opportunity to the new members to communicate their ideas and form collaborations for future publications. The next meeting of the network will take place in the forthcoming (May 2010) International Conference of the RSA in Pecs, Hungary where the MedBReD network organizes a session devoted to the Mediterranean and Balkan periphery.