

cc.alps

Bozen Conference

Synthesis of the Work session 2 (April 3 2009)

Speaker : Roger Walther

Animator: Alexandre Mignotte

Roger Walther presented the initiative he's committed in for the local community of Goms in Switzerland. This small locality decided in 1997 to reach energy autarchy.

First of all, Mr Walther insisted on the fact that such an aim intrinsically puts into question the **definition and the spatial limits of the autharchy**. Even if such questions are theoretically crucial, he considered that we have to put them aside if we concretely want to reach the objective.

The presentation and the discussions with the participants of the session thus focused on the challenges to face in order to achieve such a goal.

Two major challenges are dealing with **time** and **local governance**. Reaching an energy autharchy situation needs time because it implies the construction of a common vision of the future of a local community. The process consequently needs an appropriate governance system with the participation of the local population. The process also has to be "soft" and flexible and to generate confidence between the stakeholders involved.

Enhancing the good appropriation of the project and of this common vision by local inhabitants also lies on a **good communication campaign**. The interest of the **media** in the project is very important while it makes the population prouder of its decision and increases the visibility and the legitimacy of their ambition for their future.

An other major challenge is of course **money**: money for starting the project and implementing the process; and money for maintaining the strategy alive through the years. Private and public funds are requested in one hand (mots of the time in the first phases of the project), and benefits should be produced due to the strategy implemented in an other hand. Even though the profitability of such a process is to be assessed, it is impossible to estimate how many euros I gain when one euro is invested in the strategy. An other approach of energy and of the uses of energy completely has to be thought.

The financing of an energy autharchy strategy also suggests a **good structuring and efficient functioning of renewable energies supply chains**. This is a crucial challenge in many alpine countries because it allows renewable energies to be competitive and really attractive in front of classic "grey" energies. Some regions (i.e. South Tyrol, Lower Austria) are already well advanced in such a way.

The **legal status** of the institution that holds the process and that sells the energy produced is very important. In Goms, it appears compulsory for the municipality to be the "major owner" oh the services provided (51%). But a participant in the audience underlines that a European directive forbids a public local authority to produce and to distribute energy. "Hybrid" solutions have to be set up also for the management of a local energy autharchy system.

At the end of the very dense and fruitful exchanges that rose from the presentation of Mr Walther, the audience stressed on the fact that such a goal intrinsically put on the table the question of the **local/universal property of energy**, and more globally speaking the question of the property of environmental goods.