

# Urban Regions Shifting to Circular Economy: Understanding Challenges for New Ways of Governance

**1st Meeting of the EU Platform on Municipal Solid Waste Regulation &  
Governance: Governance Arrangements and Market Structure  
16 November 2021**

Andreas Obersteg (HafenCity University, Germany)

## Background and methods

- This presentation focuses on the results of a governance analysis of **six urban regions in Europe** involved in the Horizon 2020 project REPAiR Grant Agreement No.: 688920 [www.h2020repair.eu](http://www.h2020repair.eu)
- Semi-structured interviews (58), document analysis and workshops with local stakeholders lead to a draft list of governance challenges
- The research results in the six cases were used as input for the Living Lab process throughout the project

## Shifting to CE: Need for governance

- How can cities and urban regions support the shift towards CE?
- What are the challenges for urban regions?
- Three main dimensions to examine governance challenges in relations to CE –
  - Multi-level governance (EU, national, regional, municipal)
  - Cross-sectoral governance (within the public sector)
  - Quadruple helix governance (public, private, academic, citizen)



**Hamburg |  
Germany**



**Łódź |  
Poland**



**Ghent |  
Belgium**



**Amsterdam |  
The Netherlands**



**Pécs |  
Hungary**



**Naples |  
Italy**



# Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, The Netherlands

- AMA one of the frontrunners towards a CE
- City of Amsterdam has a circular city policy
- Private sector (waste management, construction) work on CE initiatives
- *Organisational fragmentation (between municipalities, between sectors)*
- *Lack of leadership on regional level*

## Naples, Italy

- A new waste management system was established, managing to overcome the waste emergency
- *Problems remain: like contaminated areas, waste bales storage, lack of recycling and incineration capacities*
- *Mismatch between different public entities (municipalities, waste management units ATO, region) → lack of implementation*
- *Mistrust of citizens toward public authorities*

## Pécs, Hungary

- Achievements to decrease waste generation and improve waste management
- Few voluntary CE initiatives in the private sector
- *Lack of visible political intention to CE on national level*
- *Centralisation of waste management leads to sinking interest of local stakeholders (e.g. due to unavailability of secondary raw materials)*

## Łódź, Poland

- Regulation on waste management relatively recent
- Responsibility of municipalities for waste management; they appoint private waste collection companies
- *Still low environmental awareness of citizens*
- *Legal regulations do not adequately ensure quality of waste management*
- *Lack of exchange and cooperation between municipalites*



## Ghent, Belgium

- Long tradition of waste management in Flanders and high waste sensitivity
- Ambition to reduce waste
- Waste management integrated into climate policy and urban planning, but CE still needs to be integrated
- *Adaptation of waste management (and CE) to changing demography and to spatial conditions in urban areas (lack of space)*

# Hamburg, Germany

- Germany frontrunner in waste management, Circular economy Act as legal framework
- *Need to improve waste management accordingly to spatial situation (e.g. no space for separated collection in dense urban areas) and changing demography (multi ethnic population)*
- *Lack of cooperation between waste management and spatial planning*
- *CE initiatives from civil society and economy not imbedded in public strategy*

## Conclusions from the six cases

**Multi-level governance** while ambitious initiatives for CE do exist in urban regions, the connection between these local and regional initiatives to policies on higher political and administrative levels is lacking.

**Cross-sectoral governance** within the public sector: lack of connection of CE strategies with other policy fields especially spatial planning. Another major challenge is the often-missing horizontal cooperation between municipalities. Strategies and activities often remain local, not using the opportunity of promoting CE in larger regional scale.

**Multi-actor or quadruple helix governance:** in some regions many entrepreneurial and civic society initiatives exist, but they lack coordination and support by the public sector; in other regions still only few activities from the economic sector and citizens can be observed and the public sector is mostly absent in promoting CE.

## Remarks and outlook

- Six urban regions started in different phases of transition towards CE
- The presented results are only intermediate results
- In all of the six regions changes during the project's lifetime could be observed
- These changes are subject of our current research

Urban Planning (ISSN: 2183-7635)  
2019, Volume 4, Issue 3, Pages X–X  
DOI: 10.17645/up.v4i3.2158

Article

# Urban Regions Shifting to Circular Economy: Understanding Challenges for New Ways of Governance

Andreas Obersteg <sup>1,\*</sup>, Alessandro Arlati <sup>1</sup>, Arianne Acke <sup>2</sup>, Gilda Berruti <sup>3</sup>, Konrad Czapiewski <sup>4</sup>, Marcin Dąbrowski <sup>5</sup>, Erwin Heurkens <sup>5</sup>, Cecília Mezei <sup>6</sup>, Maria Federica Palestino <sup>3</sup>, Viktor Varjú <sup>6</sup>, Marcin Wójcik <sup>7</sup> and Jörg Knieling <sup>1</sup>

# h2020repair.eu

# Thank you!

[andreas.obersteg@hcu-hamburg.de](mailto:andreas.obersteg@hcu-hamburg.de)

