

Missions for sustainability: New approaches for science and society

## Session abstract

### Template for session organizers

The session abstracts should provide a brief overview of the session scope and design and a **synthesis of the key discussion points and results** of each session. They should always position the issues addressed in **relation to the [main themes](#)** of the conference.

The session abstracts will serve to prepare a **conference documentation** for dissemination to the interested general public (PDF). They may equally be used as a basis for producing a summary in other formats (multimedia). In addition, these abstracts will inform a **position paper** on mission-oriented research and innovation, prepared by the Leibniz research network after the event.

Please do not attribute statements to individual participants (results-oriented abstract)

Please use accessible language / English only

Total length: ~1500 words

### Session organizer(s)

Moderator

Dr Judith Terstriep, Institute for Work and Technology, Westphalian University Gelsenkirchen

Contributors:

Oliver Peters, German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu)

Sandra Wagner-Endres, German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu)

Maria Rabadjeva, Institute for Work and Technology, Westphalian University Gelsenkirchen

### Session title

Mission-orientation in local economic development

## Session description (~500 words)

Mission-oriented policy has gained momentum in recent years as a response to the grand societal challenges reflected in multiple national and international political agendas. The formulated missions call for participatory approaches involving actors from all societal sub-systems (policy, administration, economy, academia and civil society). However, governance of missions at a local level, particularly in the framework of economic development, is so far poorly understood and not yet in the focus of the current debate on mission-orientation. In the sustainability discourse, municipalities do have several concepts at their disposal, such as the 2030 Agenda, the common good economy, the doughnut economics or the circular economy, for implementing a sustainability mission. However, these concepts need to be adapted locally. In order to establish mission-oriented local economic development, local economic development agencies, in particular, are called upon to further develop their work in terms of content and organization through new thematic and structural formats. The session discussed the role of local economic development and the potential of participative governance approaches in implementing political missions based on local challenges.

The session first addressed the question of how to operationalise local (economic) sustainable development for municipalities? Further, the role of local economic development in sustainability transitions was discussed: What is the place of local economic development in achieving missions? How can missions for local economic development be governed so the set goals are achieved in the set timeframe?

The questions were addressed within three contributions and a joint discussion between the referees and the participants. In the first input, Oliver Peters (Difu) presented an assessment of sustainable concepts and discussed their applicability to municipalities. The input concluded that none of the concepts is developed specifically for use in municipalities. Adaptation and translation for the local level are highly needed and require, to varying degrees, additional knowledge and resources, which municipalities often don't have. Second, Sandra Wagner-Endres (Difu) gave an overview of the reorientation in local economic development (LED) in Germany and emphasized its role in achieving sustainability transitions. Mission-orientation in LED requires an appropriate innovative capacity of local development agencies (LDA, Wirtschaftsförderung). LDAs have to understand themselves as a representative of the public, focus on new topics and stakeholders, and allow transformative learning processes in their own organisations. Innovation, the common good, sustainability and resilience must be established as new overall targets beyond economic growth. This way, LDAs can become a game-changer in local mission-orientation. Finally, Maria Rabadjieva discussed the potential of participative governance approaches for implementing missions for local economic development. A balanced scorecard for joint strategizing and real-world laboratories for project development and implementation were presented as examples of participative formats for LED in accordance with the mission-oriented framework by Mazzucato, tested by the LDA in Bottrop.

Participative governance needs transparency, involvement and interaction between actors. Different formats can be applied depending on the purpose, local factors and degree of engagement.

### Main discussion points and reflections (~500 words)

A point was made that when talking about the development of cities, the discussion of de-growth is unimaginable. Cities are still striving to grow. It was also made clear that even in Germany, the recommendation for reorientation of LDAs and increase of innovative capacity are still in development. Most LDAs work on professionalization, some on reorientation.

From there, the discussion focused on the difference between the European countries. While Germany with its decentralized structure of local economic development, has resources (not just economic but also experience) to pursue missions on a local level (an example is Dresden as “Zukunftstadt” (future city), other European countries especially smaller ones as Estonia, which are organized centrally, do not. Small countries are struggling with local governance, which poses the question: how can centralised countries with no local development agencies implement sustainability on a local level? In some cases, it is possible for cities to take the lead and interfere in local economic development. Here learning from partner regions can be helpful. An example was given with Tallinn, which is influenced by Helsinki – a very developed region. The collaboration between cities shows the potential and possibilities of local sustainable development.

### Main results and conclusions (~500 words)

- See the three statements.