

**British-German Symposium „Towards the Big Environmental City“
14/15 April 2011**

Summary of Statement of Monika Griefahn

PANEL 2: „What do societal actors expect from each other?“

Societal actors are experts of their topic. This expertise is – different from the way it was 30 years ago – acknowledged by politicians and administration. Their points have made an entrance into laws of various political sectors and political levels. I am missing a holistic way of thinking in training and education for different jobs. Job-training should be organized with much more integrated aspects in mind. What we need (for example) is an architect who thinks about green facades and materials which are not only aesthetic but also wealthy without being told by a climate expert. A lot of children have asthma or allergies. We need houses like trees and cities like forests.

The opportunity for a partnership between civil society and government has a good chance to be successful. Such partnerships promise to be most successful in the lower parts of the political administration: On the municipals or federal state level. In Germany, the conservation administration structure is decentralized and municipals can decide several things on their own – within the overall framework. And if administration and civil society actors come together as partners, it is very important that they come together at the *beginning* of a project. Such co-operations should be fair and on a par, otherwise people become frustrated. A little acknowledgement should be the very least.

Money is an incentive in the so called *Vertragsnaturschutz*, (“conservation by contracts”) where farmers volunteer to deal with their fields according to nature requirements and make contracts with the federal state administrations. The European Union helps to finance these co-operations, but we have to be sure that we do not pay for what should be self-evident, for example clean water.

While on the one hand I would say that a close vicinity as in lower levels of political administrations are important for successful co-operations, on the other hand we need the distanced decision makers, who are not involved in neighborhoods and sensitivities. They can create a framework to trigger partnership and creative ideas.

When talking about conservation we shouldn't forget urban areas. Studies about birds published by the NABU show that nowadays cities have more different species of birds than the countryside. They find more diverse habitats in the cities as they do in the agricultural shaped landscape of our times. So diversity is most important and to create conditions for that – in the country side and in towns. Co-operations of town administration and conservationists are therefore important. Also it is important, that town administrations create an environment-friendly framework for their citizens. This can start by being a good example and pass procure directives for the use of environment- and health-friendly products in the administration and public projects and by creating in your own buildings a market for energy efficiency, alternative energy and healthy (non-toxic) materials.

Co-operation in my opinion can also be – on the part of the administration – to sometimes turn a blind eye. The two sides might not be real partners then, but allies. Is for example guerilla gardening really a bad thing? In Germany sometimes local administrations tolerate guerilla gardening although – as far as I know - in legal terms it may be damage to property.

The role of the economy I do see positive in one way. A lot of companies founded foundations and support conservation or conservation activists. The economy cannot see us as their enemy anymore and we as conservationists cannot see them as the bad. What you need today is the co-operation between government, NGOs and companies. The best is to sit at the “round table” to find common ways to act. Today the lines aren't as clear – and that is a good development.