

# “Rio+20 in the Community”

Local communities on the way to sustainability

→ **Examples** from Germany



# Legal information

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# Welcome



## Dear friends and readers,

Twenty years ago the famous 1992 Conference of the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro on sustainable development, known as the “Earth Summit”, set standards for the first time for a global policy on development and the environment with Agenda 21 – and within this framework the Framework Convention on Climate Change was also agreed. This year the major task of the Conference, two decades on, is to set standards for a global path towards a sustainable economy, a green economy. The chances of this are realistic, since in recent years there has begun a change of thinking throughout the world. Business recognises its responsibility for environmentally benign development that is at the same time economically viable, through which new, future-orientated jobs will be created – in the industrialised, the newly industrialising and the developing countries equally! With its strong environmental economy Germany is already well on the way towards a green economy of this kind. This pioneering position, however, brings us obligations as well. We are urging the EU to further strengthen its efforts towards creating a sustainable economy and towards commitment to climate protection. Only by leading in this way will we maintain our international credibility.

More than anything else, however, we earn our credibility and our place as an example by demonstrating ways in which a sustainable economy that is benign to the climate and to resources functions in practice at the local level, in communities – that is, where people live, work, do business, study and spend their free time. It was not without good reason, twenty years ago, that with section 28 of Agenda 21 the international community called specifically on local communities to create action plans for sustain-

able development with the involvement of their local people. In Germany this appeal has fallen on highly fertile ground. Thousands of communities have now adopted resolutions in response to Agenda 21. In addition there are many communities that have no formal resolution but are working hard for sustainable development, in some cases doing so under other names such as climate protection communities, communities with 100% renewable energy or Transfair communities. The policy-making system is also supporting this commitment with strategic actions, in particular by the National Climate Initiative set up by the Ministry that I represent. The results speak for themselves. The current figures from the implementation of the community guidelines make it clear; approval was recently given for the 2000th project. Furthermore with the Masterplan programme, particularly ambitious communities are demonstrating how the objective of “100% climate protection” can be realised within one generation. The word is getting about. More and more communities are showing a growing interest in climate policy; the increasing number of enquiries received by the Service Agency: Municipal Climate Protection, based at the German Institute for Urban Development (Difu) confirms this.

The communities are showing how sustainable modes of development can go hand in hand with greater quality of life and prosperity at the local level. They are thus rather like laboratories for sustainable development in which people develop new ways of living and working that consume less energy, conserve natural resources and create value-added chains. This brochure introduces some of the achievements of these communities, invites you to seek dialogue with the pioneers of local sustainability and lets you draw inspiration from the people who have brought their ideas for Agenda 21 for sustainable development in smaller and larger steps to life. ■

With sincere good wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Norbert Röttgen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'R'.

Dr Norbert Röttgen  
Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation  
and Nuclear Safety

# 1 Introduction

➔ Twenty years ago in 1992 the international community adopted the concept of “sustainable development” at the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as the guiding principle for the twenty-first century for tackling the growing challenges facing humanity. With Agenda 21 the UN presented a worldwide action plan for turning such sustainable development into a reality. Section 28 of the Agenda addressed local communities, encouraging them each to develop a community programme for sustainable development, working together with the various local actors from business, government and civil society, and implementing their programme as a “Local Agenda 21”.

A large number of cities and municipalities have risen actively to this challenge. Numerous good examples demonstrate the innovational energy that different groups of actors have evolved to achieve the necessary process of transformation to a sustainable society. This brochure gives you an insight into the sustainability activities taking place at local community level in Germany, and shows how these activities in specific areas and selected spheres of action can lead to sustainable development that is worthy of imitation.

The brochure is based on a survey conducted across Germany in 2011. Selected examples from the current survey show the ways in which the opportunities available locally are incorporated into community policy and how prospects for the future are successfully developed.

One thing is particularly clear: many communities are pioneers of change and could be effective as innovators in the area of sustainable development. Such developments are particularly successful where cooperation is initiated between different actors and different communities leading to the forging of valuable alliances.

To facilitate exchange of experiences among communities and also their dialogues with trans-regional and national actors, the Netzwerk21Kongress is held in Germany every year. It was in relation to this Congress that the proposal for “Rio+20 in the Community” and this brochure arose. ■



## 2 Communities: active partners for sustainable development

**As the lowest administrative level and with restricted decision-making powers, local communities nevertheless also have a right of self-determination – which they can use for activities aimed at sustainability. What are the particular challenges for local communities and what opportunities are available to them with regard to sustainability?**

➔ Many local communities and actors in Germany responded to the call from the UN Earth Summit in 1992. Since then, a wide range of ideas for sustainable development have been put into practice. With various names and many types of programme, local alliances have arisen in hundreds of towns and municipalities that have developed, with strong involvement of civil society, approaches to sustainable ways of life and economic systems and which provide impetus for cultural change.

In towns and villages around the world the problems of unsustainable development can be seen in everyday life, and with growing topicality: social insecurity, the results of climate change, limited access to energy and clean water and fluctuations in the means for earning a living.

In Germany too, communities are affected by some of these generally complex problems, and people and decision-makers at local level are experiencing ever more frequently that a solution with conventional strategies and resources is barely possible. At the same time, however, local actors have the necessary experience and potential at hand to open new ground and to confront these challenges. Experience gained from practice demonstrates that in numerous cities and municipalities the local people are seizing opportunities, setting up sustainability activities and experimental projects and thus are also introducing important learning processes. The activation of involvement by civil society plays an important role here, for example in solving social problems, in culture and education or by conservation of resources and the use of renewable energy sources.



*World Café, part of the 5th Netzwerk21 Kongress in Hanover, 2011*

The design of sustainable development must however be promoted at all political levels, and must also be intermeshed and agreed between the levels. Many communities began a Local Agenda 21 in the mid-1990s after the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and set their plans of action in motion at that time. This also gave rise to impulses for action in regional centres and also at national level. Many regional strategies and also the national sustainability strategy presented in 2002 received important stimuli from this early engagement at local level. Likewise the implementation today of this trans-regional sustainability strategy is significantly dependent on specific projects and actions at local level. Some of the German federal regions, such as North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia, can already make intensive use of the potential of their communities, since active networks of community sustainability actors have been established at regional level.

## LAG 21 NRW – Local Agenda 21 network in North Rhine – Westphalia

→ The Agenda 21 NRW e.V. regional working group (LAG 21 NRW) was established in 2001 as a network of excellence for the professionalisation of local sustainability processes by a large number of municipalities and districts, associations and institutions, churches and trade unions in NRW, which also function in the group as members. LAG 21 NRW serves as an action platform across the NRW region and as a link between actors in the Agenda 21 civil society processes, policy-makers, government and academia. It also has the purpose of developing and implementing global sustainability objectives for community-level involvement. To this end it processes a large number of projects, most of which are coordinated by its office with eight members of staff.

Its core issues include cross-linking and knowledge transfer for communities, the introduction of community-level sustainability management systems and education for sustainable development. Through its many campaigns and projects the Working Group has become a central point of contact in North Rhine-Westphalia and has built up relevant competences, which it passes on to the local communities.

In 2005, for example, it was possible to introduce a sustainable community land management programme and establish it as a strategic control mechanism in over twenty towns and cities in NRW.

In order to stabilise the land management processes thus established, LAG 21 NRW developed the “Milestone 2012” certification system. This provides for objective evaluation by which community successes in sustainable land use can be certified.

In addition to networking at community level, LAG 21 NRW also supports the vertical integration of central, regional, local and community government as a key element for the implementation of sustainable development.

[www.lag21.de](http://www.lag21.de)



*The Climate Protection Flag is presented to the Barlach-Gymnasium and the Berufskolleg Werne by LAG 21 NRW and the local climate alliance of the Unna district during the “Together for Climate Protection” campaign*

The annual nationwide Netzwerk21Kongress mentioned above, which has taken place since 2007, is also funded by a wide spectrum of actors and is organised each year by a different community. This two-day congress serves as a platform for exchange, learning and networking for local sustainability initiatives and makes available documentation and working materials via its own online portal. During the congress, particularly committed actors from communities, companies and civil society are given special recognition and presented with the “ZeitzeicheN” (“Sign of the Times”) Prize. The congress is funded by the Fed-

eral Ministry for the Environment, the Federal Environment Agency, the respective hosting community and numerous sponsors and voluntary staff (see [www.netzwerk21kongress.de](http://www.netzwerk21kongress.de)).

There are also many other conferences, programmes and activities in Germany for bringing together communities and regions, in areas of action that include climate protection and renewable energy, urban planning and education for sustainable development. ■

### 3 The transformation process challenge: communities are “pioneers of the energy transition”

**To secure human habitats for future generations, it is necessary for us to maintain certain parameters – such as limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and thus curbing global warming. So what contribution can projects and actions at the local level make to this? What do such activities and projects look like?**

→ The aim of curbing global warming has been internationally determined with a limit of 2°C. To achieve this it is necessary to create a largely carbon-free provision of energy by the middle of this century and for business and society to undergo radical change.

In Germany the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) has therefore proposed a new “Social Contract for Sustainability”. The “great transformation” that this implies will take place, and be felt, primarily in towns and cities. That is where consumption and emissions are particularly high, but the potential for change and redesign are greatest (see WBGU: “World in Transition – A Social Contract for Sustainability”, Berlin 2011).



*School project on energy transition in the Fürstenfeldbruck district – the children playing an active part*

New environmentally friendly technologies that significantly improve energy and resource efficiency and make it possible to use renewable energy effectively are a decisive condition for this transformation process to succeed. They alone, however, are not nearly enough. If such technological innovations are to really make an impact, they must be accompanied by a cultural shift, with different patterns of consumption and different ways of life.

This means developing ways of living and doing business that allow a fair distribution within and between the generations even at a global level while also reflecting previous economic growth. An effective redesign of our economic system in this manner is a long-term undertaking and will require not only control from policy-makers but also freedom to experiment and possibilities for dialogue and participation. Local communities play an important role in this respect since they offer a diversity of experimental spaces that in many places are used by people who live, do business, work, study and spend their free time there.

The creation of a sustainable system of energy supply is a central issue for communities. Cities, municipalities and districts have had good experiences with energy and climate protection strategies that are worked out in collaboration with local actors and that offer a goal-based orientation for action. Participants include representatives from policy and government and, ideally, the municipal public utilities, other local energy suppliers, the local housing industry and local energy initiatives. Other actors that have appropriate potentials and resources, such as energy farmers, energy agencies and local financial services providers are partly involved.

## Fürstenfeldbruck: “ZIEL21” – Realising the energy transition

➔ The Fürstenfeldbruck district was the first in Germany to set itself the objective of halving its energy consumption by 2030 and providing for all its energy supply needs from renewable energy sources. Fürstenfeldbruck was one of two model districts for Agenda 21 in Bavaria, and so it developed its guiding principles and catalogue of actions for sustainability in the region at an early stage.

To organise the energy transition at a regional level, the first energy forum was held back in 2000, at which the objective was underpinned by a resolution. The following statement was at the centre of the “Fürstenfeldbruck Energy Resolution”: “We will build on creativity and on the many and varied competences of people primarily from agriculture, the crafts and trades, trade, industry, services, local authorities and churches. We need the support of all responsible inhabitants of the district. By this means we will obtain our natural resources and secure the regional economy with the goal of improving the quality of life.” The expansion target received unanimous approval from the district council. The ZIEL21 (Centre for Innovative Energy in the Fürstenfeldbruck district) association was founded to carry out the practical implementation tasks. This broadly based network of actors continues to be active today. Members include numerous medium-sized enterprises, largely

from the skilled trades and planning sectors, along with local councils, the regional savings bank and the Fürstenfeldbruck municipal works.

In 2011 the power supply division of the Fürstenfeldbruck municipal works supplied 20% of the electricity demand purely from solar energy. At national level the percentage of all electricity generated from renewable sources is about 20%, of which some 3% is generated from photovoltaics. The focus of the coming years in the Fürstenfeldbruck district will be to increase windpower capacity.

Continued cooperation with and between the regional actors will be organised by the ZIEL21 partnership. Continuity is also achieved because the offices of ZIEL21 have been based directly at the administrative district office from the outset.

**[www.ziel21.de](http://www.ziel21.de)**

*Energy cycle ride: viewing renewable energy facilities in the Fürstenfeldbruck district*



The energy transition is founded on three strategies, of equal importance and interrelated: firstly, saving energy through changes in behaviour; secondly, developing and using energy-efficient technologies; and thirdly, tapping and exploiting renewable energy sources. Here again, local-level programmes and strategies have proved themselves to be sustainable where they are devised with the participation of the local people and that offer wide scope for involvement in their implementation.

## Saerbeck: an integrated climate change mitigation and adaptation concept with opportunities for participation

→ The municipality of Saerbeck, with 7,200 inhabitants, lies in the Münsterland area of North Rhine-Westphalia. In 2008 the local council decided to convert the entire energy supply for the municipality to renewable sources by 2030. After this the Integrated Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Concept (IKKK) was developed that contains, in addition to guiding principles, specific spheres of activity, demonstrative key projects and a package of measures with specific implementation and evaluation steps.

Opportunities for involvement by local people, for local agriculture and local businesses are an integral element of the IKKK and are thus embedded in a strategic overall concept that is supported by the entire municipality. The mission statement “Climate Community Saerbeck plus 2030 – positive energy balance in favour of renewable energy” focuses particularly on the three action areas of “Bio-energy park”, “Education/transfer/citizen involvement” and “Marketing/publicity” within the IKKK, for the purpose of developing participation concepts and systematically implementing them.

The centrepiece of the future energy self-sufficiency will be the Bioenergiepark Saerbeck, whose creation began in 2011 on land formerly used by the German armed forces. This “municipal energy park” will feature photovoltaic, biogas and windpower systems. The local population has a financial interest in this facility. It has been made possible largely by the formation of a citizens’ cooperative, “Energie für Saerbeck eG”, in cooperation with the local cooperative bank. This project is intended to enable value creation in the best sense that is both environmentally and socially just: a sustainable use of redeveloped land coupled with renewable energy sources and funded by both government and civil society.

[www.klimakommune-saerbeck.de](http://www.klimakommune-saerbeck.de)



*Handing over the keys of the biogas plant to the farmers in Saerbeck*

A comprehensive and coherent transformation strategy for the energy system requires a large number of instruments and concepts, such as improving the energy performance of older housing stock, the funding of energy-efficient new buildings right through to plus-energy homes (that are net providers of energy), converting the power generating system to renewables or changing the power supplier to a renewable source; and measures to build consciousness and to change habitual use patterns.

## Making an impact with campaigns

→ “Tübingen macht blau” – this successful climate change mitigation campaign started in early 2008. The campaign and its actions provide tips and encouragement for inhabitants of the university city to contribute personally to blue skies over Tübingen while also saving CO<sub>2</sub> and money. Be it by using public transport or the car sharing scheme, or by changing to green electricity or improving the energy efficiency of schools – the campaign addresses all participants, from local government and local business through to individual residents, inviting them to move towards climate-friendly patterns of living and resource use. The municipal works are also actively involved. They are working towards renewable energy and energy efficiency and are providing a fleet of low-emissions buses. The mayor is setting a good example: he has abandoned the official car in favour of travelling to work by bicycle.

[www.tuebingen-macht-blau.de](http://www.tuebingen-macht-blau.de)



*Energy consultancy information stall in Tübingen*

When it comes to a complete changeover of power sources to renewable energy, small municipalities in rural areas often play important roles as initiators. They generally have the advantages of good neighbourhood relations, an emotional involvement with their town or village and can discuss new ideas at a direct personal level. The empirical knowledge gained by these innovators is indispensable for the energy transformation and is in demand even from other countries.

## **The village of Feldheim and energy self-sufficiency: local expertise for worldwide export**

➔ Feldheim, part of the town of Treuenbrietzen in the Potsdam-Mittelmark district, obtains all its energy on its own doorstep. This brings visitors to this little village from all over the world.

Feldheim has been self-sufficient in energy since late 2010. 37 households with 128 inhabitants obtain electricity and heat from their own production. In fact more electricity is generated than needed, and the excess fed into the electricity grid. The electricity is obtained from 43 wind turbines with a total capacity of 74.1 megawatts plus a 500 kW biogas plant. The biogas plant additionally produces 533 kW of heat, which is distributed to the households via a 3,000 metre district heat grid. The heat grid is owned by Feldheim Energie GmbH & Co. KG, a company in which the connected households, businesses and the town of Treuenbrietzen have combined forces. The owner of the separate electricity network for supplying the end users is a company named Energiequelle GmbH und Co. WP Feldheim 2006 KG.

The high level of investment that was required for constructing the separate district heat grid could not, however, be met by the municipality and its residents alone. Additional funding was therefore obtained from EU funding programmes.

The innovative model was developed by Energiequelle GmbH. Households connected to the self-sufficient energy supply system each contributed a capital share of €3,000. Those that take only electricity, however, paid €1,500 each. In return, all participants profit from the fact that the power and heat costs are about 20% lower than those of conventional providers. This has won over even the sceptics. Without the acceptance and active involvement of the local people, this local energy transition would not have been possible.

**[www.neue-energien-forum-feldheim.de](http://www.neue-energien-forum-feldheim.de)**



*Biogas plant in Feldheim*

There is now a growing movement of “100% EE (renewable energy) communities”. These aim to cover their entire energy requirements with renewable sources in the medium to long term. At the national level this trend is being followed with great interest by a number of research projects and moved forward by dialogue at an annual conference organised in co-operation with representatives from academia and business.

The national government has resolved to expand renewable energy generation and use. Local energy initiatives have meanwhile got the energy transition off to an early start in Germany at the local level. The first solar installations set up by local people were in operation before the turn of the millennium. In recent years, involvement by civil society has become professionalised in many places. What began as “community initiatives” have developed into “community businesses” that are now significant pace-setters for their community and indeed for their region.

### From community initiative to community business – the Schönau electricity company

→ Following the reactor catastrophe of Chernobyl the inhabitants of Schönau and fellow campaigners resolved to advocate sustainable energy production without nuclear power and in 1986 formed the citizens’ initiative “Parents for a nuclear-free future”. Nine years later, on the basis of two referenda, they were able to buy their local electricity network out of a nuclear power operator and soon afterwards took over the supply of electricity to their district. Since then the community-owned “Elektrizitätswerke Schönau” (EWS) has operated the local grid in a manner that is environmentally exemplary and economically viable. This community business enjoys the high regard of electricity customers throughout Germany thanks to its transparency and its pioneering environmental role. With more than 125,000 customers it is in third place among the country’s independent providers of green electricity, ranking behind only Lichtblick and Greenpeace Energy.

[www.ews-schoenau.de](http://www.ews-schoenau.de)



Company offices of Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS)

## Solarcomplex AG brings together local capital and helps a whole region with the change

➡ In September 2000 twenty people in the Hegau-Bodensee region of Baden-Württemberg decided to dare a real utopia, attempting to develop and modify their region in accordance with the principles of sustainability. On the basis of positive development goals and effective projects, they resolved that energy supply in particular would be largely converted to locally generated renewable energy sources by 2030. To realise this ambitious objective, the participants set up a company, Solarcomplex GmbH. Today this region-wide company is funded by more than 750 members and plans, builds and operates regional electricity and heat generation systems from renewable energy and offers equity participation in this equipment as a form of ecological investment. Such equity investment is only available to people living in the region. This aims to ensure that work contracts and profits remain in the region and that the construction of renewable energy plants will lead to the creation of local jobs. In the meantime many solar power plants, bio-energy villages, a hydroelectric facility and a wind farm have been set up and further projects are planned. The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction thus far achieved is roughly 25,000 tonnes per year. In the meantime Solarcomplex has been

converted into a non-listed corporation, making possible a broad co-determination among the persons involved. As joint owners of the regional energy systems, the local people and businesses have a direct interest in value creation from their renewable energy sources.

**[www.solarcomplex.de](http://www.solarcomplex.de)**



*PV installation and biogas plant with combined heat and power unit in Mauenheim, the first bioenergy village in Baden-Württemberg*

In cities and towns the construction of wind farms or biomass plants – as with other large construction projects – can be met with resistance from local people. Experience indicates that involving the local people at an early stage of the planning phase creates a constructive climate for discussion and can also contribute to conflicts of interest being resolved. There is a wide range of methods for this. One result of joint planning of this kind may for example be the formation of a community company or even a “community wind turbine”, financed by the residents and local traders and whose returns remain in the region and flow back to the local investors. ■

## 4 Think global, act local: creating fair markets

**Growing economic problems and increasing social polarisation are among the largest challenges facing societies everywhere. With the onset of globalisation the mutual dependencies have extended beyond national boundaries. How can local communities contribute to addressing these challenges? What potentials can be mobilised for this at the local level?**

→ The key issue of the 2012 “Green Economy” UN Conference on Sustainable Development, which focused on combating poverty, draws the important areas of environment and development together. For local communities this offers contact points with a wide range of possibilities for action. These range from the broad use of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures through to cooperation between cities and their surrounding areas and from fair trade through sustainable procurement to sustainable education.

Much has been done in recent years as regards fair trade and sustainable procurement. Communities such as Dortmund, Bonn and Tübingen undertake their public procurement sustainably and fairly on the basis of central purchasing guidelines. They have also set up fair trade campaigns for their citizens to make more and more fair trade products attractive and accessible to as many customers as possible.

These initiatives provide other towns and cities with similar impulses; thus for example all fifty-three districts of the Ruhr region have created an alliance against exploitative child labour – the Magna Charta Ruhr.2010. As local bulk buyers, communities can demonstrate power in the market, particularly when they act together to encourage the production of sustainable products.

### **Dortmund – “the capital of fair trade”**

→ In 2003 Dortmund was the first city to be awarded the title of “Capital of Fair Trade” in the nationwide competition of the same name. Dortmund managed to repeat its victory in 2005 and became a source of inspiration for other communities. The city’s “Action Coalition for Fair Trade” has existed for many years and achieved noticeable effects from its innovations. For example, in 2008 the Dortmund FA!R Trade Exhibition and Conference was held for the first time; it now has a trans-regional importance and is expected to reach out to all of Europe in the medium term.

The Magna Charta Ruhr.2010 marked a new chapter in the history of fair trade in the year 2012. During their involvement in the European City of Culture RUHR.2010, all fifty-three communities of the Ruhr region committed themselves to honouring their global responsibility and in future for their public procurement to avoid products that involve exploitative child labour. These communities and districts, with more than five million inhabitants, have immense purchasing power and can thus make a clear contribution to protecting children from exploitative and harmful labour, as well as sending out a strong signal for the global responsibility of local communities in Europe. Together with committed actors from world shops, Agenda offices, One World centres and church bodies, Dortmund has moved the Magna Charta Ruhr considerably further forward.

With its extensive initiatives for fair procurement Dortmund supports a high demand for fair-trade products and thus the creation of a market. This encourages producers and suppliers to change and extend their offerings to products from fair trade sources. In the medium term it is expected that public procurement will shift to comprise solely sustainable and fair-trade products.

This success is based to a large extent on the longstanding work of the Dortmund Coalition for Action, to which more than eighty associates from One World groups, churches, schools, trade, non-government organisations, educational institutions, societies and municipal departments belong. Even prominent footballers from Borussia Dortmund are on board. Well-known actors are also supporters of the Coalition. Numerous innovative ideas related to fair trade have arisen from this action group, and have been developed and put into practice. Not only the variety of the activities is remarkable, but also their strategic anchoring within the community. This goes together with the involvement of major participants and decision-makers. An important pillar is the Dortmund Agenda Office, which supports and coordinates the communities' input to the city's fair trade strategy. From the very beginning, the mayor of Dortmund also lent active support and contributes greatly to the positive public perception of the fair trade initiatives.

**[www.lokaleagenda.dortmund.de](http://www.lokaleagenda.dortmund.de)**

The palette of community procurement for environmentally benign and fair-trade products is wide. A systematic and longer term changeover is therefore necessary. Through the involvement of the communities and their networks, an economically significant "market for fair-trade products" can evolve. Producers, traders and purchasers are supported in this process and encouraged to take further steps. More and more towns and cities in Germany are applying social and environmental criteria in their procurement tenders. Whether this be for fairly produced clothing for fire-fighters, natural stone prepared without child labour or fair-trade ingredients for canteens, the number of good examples of socially and environmentally aware community procurement is constantly growing. In this the ban on child labour is usually a first and important step. Nine of the sixteen German federal regions have already passed resolutions banning the purchase of products that involve child labour within the public procurement system. In 170 German towns, cities and districts there are already council orders banning child labour. (For more on this see: [www.aktiv-gegen-kinderarbeit.de](http://www.aktiv-gegen-kinderarbeit.de))

Düsseldorf and Neuss are two examples of German cities that go still further in their tenders, demanding additional important labour rights such as all the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization. These core labour standards are minimum standards set by the ILO – an agency of the United Nations – to improve the working conditions of people worldwide.

Sustainable procurement and fair trade are closely interdependent. Aided by community resolutions and public-sector functions linked to them, the two issues can be beneficially combined. This also enables towns and cities to credibly promote changed consumption patterns for people in their domestic lives.



*Signing the Magna Charta Ruhr.2010 against exploitative child labour, 12 June 2010, Dortmund Town Hall*

## Fair timber enterprise in Chemnitz

→ In 2001 Chemnitz City Council followed a recommendation of the Agenda 21 advisory committee and decided to have the city's urban forest certified in accordance with the international sustainability standard. As part of the Forest Stewardship Council certification, reference areas were taken out of cultivation, sustainable forestry practice was introduced throughout the urban forest and at the same time areas of particular ecological importance were placed under protection. It was thus possible, for example, to designate valuable stocks of mature beech as an extensive natural monument. The numbers of black woodpecker and stock pigeon have already demonstrably increased as a result. This resolution had already been preceded by a ban on tropical timbers in municipal procurement in 1991 and membership from 1992 of the Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples. Extensive public outreach work and various projects accompanied these resolutions, as well as annual actions

in connection with GEO Biodiversity Day. Here it is possible to visit the ecological reference areas of the FSC-certified urban forest on an organised woodland walk. These guided walks do not only consider the problems of the local woodland but also discuss the situation for the tropical rainforests, their indigenous population and fair trade in timber imports. Protection of the rainforest plays an important part in the public outreach work. A new basis for discussion of this was created in Chemnitz when the FSC resolution was passed.

This FSC certification of the urban forest has brought with it even more positive consequences. The lessons learned gradually through this project, including the research conducted into the consequences of climate change, the preservation of biodiversity and for the community forestry enterprise are of considerable interest.

**[www.umweltzentrum-chemnitz.de](http://www.umweltzentrum-chemnitz.de)**



*Visiting a reference area in the Crimmitschauer Wald with a forestry educator*



*Awarding of the 2009 Fairtrade City Dortmund prizes in the Signal Iduna Park*

Communities can use the area of public procurement as an example for private consumers, say, by opting for green electricity, improving the energy performance of a building, purchasing energy-saving office equipment or stocking their canteens with regional, organic, fair-trade produce.

In developing markets for fair-trade and environmentally benign products, many other participants are required than just the local public sector and individual consumers; churches, for example, are important. These are most effective, again, at community level and can demonstrate significant economic capacities. The Lutheran and Catholic churches have 1.2 million employees between them and represent Germany's second-largest employer after the civil service. The churches also have a very large amount of properties and land and thus, like communities, have great potential to undertake effective measures for climate change mitigation and social responsibility.

Of particular importance for church congregations are the themes of worldwide justice and the preservation of the Creation. Some church institutions have made early commitments to protecting the environment, sustainable use of resources and ecologically just procurement and initiated important pilot projects in these areas. These include many fair trade activities. These began as direct cooperation with countries of the South and orientated towards the sale of fair-trade products in One World shops. Since then, fair trade activities have focussed strongly on the management of the church bodies themselves.

Many church institutions such as academies and kindergartens have changed the items they purchase to regional, organic and fair trade products. In parallel to this they are changing to an environmentally and socially sustainable system of procurement. For this they also have recourse to central church platforms and inter-regional coordination points that offer specific support for the changeover process. One such exchange platform has arisen as a result of the "Buying the Future" pilot project.



## “Buying the Future” – economic activities in churches worthy of belief

→ Buy less, but buy better” – that is the motto of the ecumenical “Buying the Future” (Zukunft einkaufen) project. This project was created by the Institute for Church and Society of the Protestant Church in Westphalia together with partners including the environmental working groups of the member churches of the Protestant Church in Germany and the German archbishoprics. “Buying the Future” is supported by the German Environmental Foundation (DBU).

With their parishes, education centres, offices and social welfare and charitable organisations, the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have a significant but largely dormant buying power for sustainable products and services. This is particularly the case for sectors such as energy, offices, facilities for community buildings, traffic and transport and technical building services. The “Buying the Future” project also aims to facilitate the church bodies in sending a clear signal by their systematic changeover to fair procurement of environmentally benign goods and in making constant use of the room for negotiation that they have as bulk consumers. After all, whether it is a women’s association, a youth group, a parish or an old people’s home, everybody decides, by their purchase, what things are produced and how. This ranges from textiles free of harmful substances and recycled paper through to fair-trade coffee.

A sustainable procurement system is being introduced step by step with the support



*The “Buying the Future” project team at the Institute for Church and Society of the Protestant Church of Westphalia*

of the advisory team. After analysing former procurement practices, possible courses of action are developed for the changeover and ultimately anchored within the organisation. In addition to the management system, the “Buying the Future” project also offers specific product information and advice on workflows and purchasing decisions, such as which labels should be given preference or which products involve special conditions when purchasing. The standardised management system for churches can also be used by communities.

“Buying the Future” is in the process of developing into a vibrant network. The people responsible for purchasing within church parishes, education centres, church administration, social welfare or charitable organisations thus come into contact for exchange and so can offer each other advice and benefit from one another’s know-how. A central role for building up this network is played by the project’s website: **[www.zukunft-einkaufen.de](http://www.zukunft-einkaufen.de)**

Ecclesiastical bodies that have organised their procurement according to environmental and social criteria often also introduce an integrated environmental management system and thus achieve additional benefits: they reduce the burden on the environment and lower costs. By this means some church organisations become important drivers for change. An example is the Protestant Academy Bad Boll, whose commitment to the region has resulted in local producers of organic produce and thus created a stable environmental value-added chain.



*The restaurant of the Protestant Academy Bad Boll*

## The Protestant Academy Bad Boll: trading sustainably and strengthening the region

➔ The Protestant Academy Bad Boll is a large inter-regional educational centre of the Protestant Church in Württemberg. The Academy runs conferences, seminars, courses of lectures and other events and employs about 130 staff. Each year about 20,000 participants attend some 450 events. Accordingly, the consumption of energy, water, paper etc. is of a substantial order of magnitude, as is providing the participants with food and drink.

The decision to begin with an environmental organisational development was thus all the more important. Back in the early 1990s environmental guidelines were agreed and have since been continually developed. In 2003 the Academy was officially certified under the EU EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme). Soon afterwards, social and economic aspects were added to the environmental “pillar” and EMAS PLUS was introduced.

The Academy pursues a holistic approach in which a systematic changeover is also taking place towards regionally produced, organic and fair-traded food products. This enables specifically regional producers to be linked in. It was thus possible to persuade the town’s butcher to obtain

meat from organic farms and to be certified under the “Bioland” farmers’ association. The Academy also motivates other producers and suppliers to organise their operations in ways that conserve resources and to set up their production according to environmental criteria.

The results can be clearly seen; through the regionalisation of its buying and the almost exclusive use of fresh produce, the Academy has reduced the amount of waste produced in its kitchen by more than 80%. Contracts with suppliers ensure that packaging and means of transport are returned. In the area of coffee and hot drinks, mostly reusable containers are used. Take-back agreements can also be found in the offices, such as for toner cartridges, batteries and electronics waste.

The Academy also maintains close contact with the Stuttgart Regional Association, the district and the surrounding areas in order to encourage sustainable development. With its commitment, the centre also creates an inter-regional stimulus, for example, for a more environmental focus for the Protestant Church Congress.

**[www.ev-akademie-boll.de](http://www.ev-akademie-boll.de)**

To make it easier for ecclesiastical bodies to save energy, water, paper and other resources, specially tailored environmental management systems were developed – the “Green Cockerel” and the “Green Rooster”. Well over 200 parishes and church bodies in Germany are already using these environmental management systems effectively. More are implementing the systems now and thus integrating elements of sustainability into their structures and processes.

The churches, dioceses and other organisations have joined together in an ecumenical network, KirUm (an abbreviation for ‘Church Environmental Management’). Having successfully instigated the church environmental management system, each parish has the opportunity of gaining certification from an external environmental auditor in accordance with the Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) of the EU. ■

## 5 Breaking new ground: creating the cultural shift to sustainability

**Our normal patterns of behaviour and habits are culturally defined; we have “learned” them. If we are to achieve sustainable development, therefore, a cultural shift is required in addition to new technologies in order to create new ways of living and patterns of behaviour. How is such a cultural shift to take place? In what areas are local communities already making headway?**

### Education for sustainable development: smart people show the way

→ Sustainable development presents considerable challenges to society and to each individual. Habits must be questioned, decision-making routines rethought, new patterns of behaviour devised and innovative methods found.

Education can create the necessary conditions for all this. For it to do so, two requirements must be satisfied: traditional access to education must be improved and creative education methods developed to enable knowledge, creative competence and abilities for sustainable action to be instilled. As community facilities, schools are particularly sought-after for



this, since they are used by children and young people from all social and cultural walks of life.

New forms and methods of an education that is itself sustainable and can also communicate the creative competence for sustainable development require that schools be opened up to society. By opening schools, children and young people learn about their self-efficacy in the formation of their personal living environment; here they find experimentation spaces and opportunities for developing their creativity and trying out innovative ideas in practice.

Sustainable development needs to be established in the various different stages of learning – from nursery school through primary and secondary schooling to higher education. It is also important at all stages to provide stimulus and support informally and outside school. Thus sustainable development must address both the content of the education and the management and organisation of the educational institutions themselves, since new forms of learning are also linked to processes of organisational development.

Local policy-making and administration can significantly encourage activities by schools and educational institutions in this direction.



*Children on a nature learning expedition*

## Discovery tours in Siegburg

➔ Many children and young people are experts in comics and computer games but know little about the plants and animals in their immediate surroundings. The district town of Siegburg, near Bonn, a town of about 40,000 inhabitants, has been committed for many years to organising a wide programme of nature discovery trips for kindergartens and primary and secondary schools. These tours, provided by the environment agency, provide a basic practical ecological knowledge and offer exciting nature experiences “on the doorstep”.

Beginning in 2002 with twenty events, the programme, which is redesigned every year, now offers about 100 discovery tours covering all seasons of the year. With the slogan “I can only protect what I know about”, walks are offered to

suit various ages that awaken a spirit of discovery in children and young people and encourage a responsible attitude towards nature. The demand from nursery and primary schools is so great that the events are quickly fully booked.

The environmental education activities correspond to numerous other events organised by the town of Siegburg within an overall framework of education for sustainable development. These include a major international children's and youth festival, in which the Siegburg Integration Council and more than eighty other organisations take part. Children are not merely treated as spectators; rather, they create their own events for their own age group.

**[www.siegburg.de/stadt/siegburg/umwelt](http://www.siegburg.de/stadt/siegburg/umwelt)**

## Erfurt – Implementing sustainability education locally

→ Erfurt, regional capital of Thuringia, declared its political will to develop a Local Agenda 21 back in 1998 with its city council resolution “Development of a concept for the sustainable development of the regional capital of Erfurt for the 21st Century”. The subsequent implementation of this resolution has been driven by a large number of single resolutions and specific measures in a variety of areas. The signing of the UN Millennium Declaration, resolutions for urban land-use planning to be compatible with solar energy and for a climate and energy concept are as much examples of fundamental strategic orientations as is the introduction of a community participation budget.

Involving children and young people in energy-saving projects in Erfurt schools, the ECO-PROFIT scheme for businesses and the “Green House Number” are concrete examples of successful projects that also explicitly address educational aspects. Meanwhile the community has introduced the new Transition Town Erfurt initiative and the Erfurt Energy Cooperative – new starting points since 2011 for sustainable development in which education and communication based on the learners’ own creative capacity play an integral role.

Thanks to these and other positive benefits, Erfurt has already been twice distinguished as a UN “Education for Sustainable Development” decade community. The community takes an active part in developing sustainable education in national networks and has participated since 2009 in the nationwide programme “Local Learning” (Lernen vor Ort).

Erfurt is striving to become an innovative education centre and place for lifelong education in the coming years. The linking element is the aim of establishing educational landscapes. Starting from a mission statement for education in which education for sustainable development is firmly



*Erfurt Town Hall with “Education for Sustainable Development” flags*

anchored, successive elements of the education plan, the education package and a comprehensive strategic system of education management will be realised. A foundation for the educational activities described is the integrated city development concept agreed in 2008, “Erfurt 2020” which is updated in close agreement with education specialists in the community.

Organisational changes in the administration, such as the setting up of an education agency, have already taken place. It is planned to extend primary schools to all-day schools and for permanent and broad involvement by civil society. This creates new learning cultures in which the elements of “doing it yourself”, “facilitating” and “encouraging” play a key role. The aim is to advance and implement the content within our own area of responsibility of the city in such a way that it acts within the urban society in the manner of an example and an initiator.

[www.erfurt.de/ef/de/engagiert/agenda21](http://www.erfurt.de/ef/de/engagiert/agenda21)

Some communities follow a comprehensive approach to sustainability and have in most cases incorporated the topic of education for sustainable development into this in a prominent place.

It has become clear from the many examples of good and successful practice that concepts such as situational learning and “local learning”, parent participation, excursions, network building with other in-

stitutions, cooperation with actors in civil society and collaboration between schools and businesses are of great importance. This also includes businesses created by pupils, which represent a successful model within a comprehensive educational approach.

Sustainable school businesses offer a considerable potential to enable children and young people to acquire skills. This is also the case for children and young people from less educated backgrounds. While working in school businesses, pupils learn how

to apply their knowledge in everyday situations and how to evaluate the effects of their actions. These projects can be coupled with the activities of other actors in civil society and above all with local small and medium-sized companies and with the local government. In addition, school businesses provide a good opportunity for equipping young people for the world of work ahead of them and also to motivate them to engage in social and environmental activities. In this situation they can even initiate development cooperation projects and achieve astonishing results.

### The Namaste Nepal S-GmbH school business, Freiberg

➔ Founded in 2005, this Freiberg-based school business of the Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium offers practical development aid in Nepal. In the small Nepalese mountain village of Gati, projects, mostly related to education for children, young people and adults, are run with the support of funds generated by the pupils and otherwise donated. This has enabled a kindergarten to open and a new school building to be built; most of the teachers' salaries are funded, and both further and in-service training is also financed. Additionally, the pupils are endeavouring to initiate sustainable local economic development so that the village will be able to operate the running of the new infrastructure itself in the future. By cooperating with reliable partner organisations and committed individuals in Nepal it has been possible to begin projects in other villages as well. One of these is in the neighbouring village of Dandakateri, where a primary school has been constructed according to the same principle.

The activities in Nepal require roughly €30,000 per year, which the school business earns by means of various projects in Freiberg; these include the Nepallauf run, the sale of an own-designed Nepal calendar, the feed-in compensation for the company's own photovoltaic system and other campaigns.

Through active press and publicity outreach work and personal contact with its supporters, Namaste Nepal S-GmbH has succeeded in basing its business model on a broad foundation. Its success results from many small contributions from countless individuals. Imitators have already appeared who have now set up similar projects at other schools to create partnerships for development cooperation. Many competitions won are testament to the successful and innovative concept of this Freiberg school business. With more than 3,000 secondary schools in Germany, the potential for setting up similar concepts in other places is considerable.

[www.nepalfreiberg.de](http://www.nepalfreiberg.de)



*Pupils from Gati and Freiberg together outside the school*

Learning situations outside school have proved important, since they promote learning close to everyday life and lifelong learning for all socio-cultural backgrounds and age groups. Activities related to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development have given a particularly important impulse for this in Germany. Joint projects and networks have been created and innovative practical projects implemented at local level and are awarded prizes; this includes communities that set examples of creating education for sustainable development in all areas in the community. The title “UN Decade of Education Community” has already been awarded

to thirteen German towns and cities. In these communities, extracurricular education is also supported and promoted. Through this, policy-makers and administration learn new ways of involving people, while local people learn how to bring their experience and commitment in a more focussed way; young and old people learn together to create new forms of sustainable cooperation. The successes demonstrate that the momentum and support at national and regional level can make a discernible contribution towards strengthening sustainability initiatives at local level and can promote important contributions at local level for the cultural changeover to sustainability.

### The BOA Minden Network reinforces social cohesion

→ The “Upper Old Town” district of Minden is home to about 2,300 people. Here professors live next door to migrant families with large numbers of children and people who rely on social welfare benefits. Despite their difficult starting positions, many people from this district are involved in community initiatives, associations, church congrega-

tions and educational institutions to support those in need of social help, provide leisure activities and to give the district an environmental orientation. More than twenty organisations have come together to form the “Education for Sustainable Development in the Upper Old Town” (BOA) Network. More are expected to join in coming years.

Here, sustainability education is used as a broad concept that focuses on developing the “Gestaltungskompetenz” or ability of each person to respond to non-sustainable issues with sustainable approaches. All are invited to participate in designing the district: young and old, local-born and migrant, established families and people in precarious situations. Thus the unemployed, who are often pushed to the fringes of society, are equally invited to take part in the development of the town and to increase their own chances of returning to work by their involvement.

With many years of commitment by its inhabitants, this district has grown into a cosmopolitan and citizen-orientated centre that is renowned at an inter-regional level; districts in other communities with similar social mixes have already expressed interest in this model of cooperation.

**[www.boa-netzwerk-minden.de](http://www.boa-netzwerk-minden.de)**



*Thanks to its enthusiastic helpers the One World Village in Minden receives a new home: the Grodno House. Its name speaks for the long partnership between the towns of Grodno (Belarus) and Minden, which was initiated by the Peace Week Action Group.*



*Erfurt Citizens' Festival 2011: the city presents itself as a centre for education*

## The culture of the everyday – new design possibilities through resource conservation

The cultural shift towards sustainable development goes hand in hand with a change in values and styles of living. With their versatile modes of expression, art and culture can reveal new possibilities for creating sustainable ways of living and doing business.

Local communities provide the ideal spaces for experimentation in this regard. The conservation of resources has grown into a sphere of activity in which community actors and those in civil society find unconventional ways of re-using and recycling materials.

Further creative undertakings frequently follow on, contributing to the conservation of resources through changes of behaviour. By this means environmentally friendly mobility services are developed, co-operative models of working are tested out and unoccupied areas of land or buildings are given additional value through innovative interim uses.

Under the guiding theme of the further use and recycling of products, numerous communities have become involved in gathering used goods and materials and making them available, for a small charge to cover expenses, to non-profit organisations. This approach draws even people on low incomes into artistic and creative work, and an element of social support is thus achieved in addition to the environmental benefits.

## KUNST-STOFFE – Central depot for reusable materials in Berlin

→ Plexiglass, wooden slats, fabrics, screws or paints – all this and much more can be put to good use if creative ideas are developed in nurseries and schools that young people then make into a reality. But where can you obtain these materials at short notice and in large quantities, and above all at low cost? The team at Kunst-Stoffe, based in Pankow in Berlin, has the following simple answer: “Here, in our used materials store”.

The “depot for reusable materials”, founded in 2006, is a redistribution centre for residual, scrap and waste products that are suitable for re-use - for artistic activities, in education, for design and for home-made or self-build projects.

Materials are collected, sorted and passed on at favourable prices to education institutions, arts projects, theatres, associations and individuals. These then use them in art works, stage designs, decorations and as individual parts. The used decorative and construction materials come from sources such as old trade fair stands, which would normally be disposed of as rubbish when the event was over. Materials that are no longer wanted can also be delivered to the group by prior arrangement. This makes an effective contribution to resources conservation and the avoidance of waste. In addition to the materials store, the organisation offers open workshops for metal, wood and textile working and studios. Practical workshops are held for various target groups to familiarise users with ecological design practice and environmentally conscious handling of resources. The training on offer also includes how to make cargo bicycles.

Up to now the Berlin region has supported the project by offering it the use of rooms in one of its own buildings at low cost on the basis of an interim use.

This multiple award-winning project is a classic example of the successful transfer of a creative idea. The approach was adapted from an initiative in New York, where recyclable materials have been collected and made available for creative re-use for more than thirty years. The organisers of the Berlin project are interested in distributing the model and are happy to pass their experiences on within a variety of networks. There is a desire for similar projects in other communities.

**[www.kunst-stoffe-berlin.de](http://www.kunst-stoffe-berlin.de)**



*Primary school children make models of a city of the future during the “Away with deceptive packaging” workshop*

Similar synergy effects between environmental and social policy can be obtained through exchange markets. In many cities, for example, special shops have opened up with a social purpose to collect used goods in good condition and pass them on free of

charge to persons with social welfare needs or make them available for purchase at low cost. This model is often associated with offers of work and qualification-boosting initiatives for unemployed people to facilitate their re-integration into the jobs market.



*Market for donated goods, Oldenburg*

## Too good to throw out – exchange and donations markets

➔ Exchange and donations markets are places where local people donate second-hand goods that they no longer need but are in good condition. These are then made available free of charge or for swapping to other people for re-use. Suitable platforms for such 'markets' could be non-commercial online exchanges run by the community, as is the case in Dresden, regional capital of Saxony, or run by the city waste management operator, as in the Lower Saxon city of Oldenburg.

There are also fixed locations where the used goods can be collected locally and exchanged. In Dresden, the "Social Goods Hall" provides specifically for persons with social welfare needs. Used goods such as clothing, books, furniture, toys and household items are given free to people who carry a Dresden social pass. Linked to this are various other activities such as qualification improvement works for the long-term unemployed, who then in turn assist in the Social Goods Hall.

The "fairKauf" project in Hanover operates in a similar way – a well-patronised shop in the city centre that offers good quality second-hand goods at affordable prices and provides work opportunities and qualification improvement for the unemployed. The "fairKauf" project is an interface between a welfare facility and a traditional retail shop and has become a meeting place in its own right.

The donations market in Oldenburg is an initiative of the local Agenda 21 group, based in the community with an Agenda office. The donations market itself is run exclusively by volunteers.

In addition to social aspects, exchange and donation markets make a valuable contribution to the environment by allowing goods to enjoy a longer useful life. This helps to conserve natural resources.

**[www.oldenburg.de](http://www.oldenburg.de) > Agenda 21**  
**[www.fairkauf-hannover.de](http://www.fairkauf-hannover.de)**  
**[www.qad-dresden.de](http://www.qad-dresden.de)>Projekte**

A further form of resource conservation is the interim use of land and buildings. For local communities this is an important topic for a variety of reasons. With interim forms of use, for example, the building blocks of community residential or commercial buildings can be obtained that are either up for sale or are threatened with being left unoccupied. Often, such in-

terim use takes an innovative form that is associated with an improvement in the district concerned, since new social relations emerge and visitors are attracted. Artistic activities can generate public attention to a particularly high degree and can be advantageous for the city's development.

## Art not Emptiness – successful follow-up use in Fürstenwalde

→ Once per year, vacant business premises in the centre of the Brandenburg town of Fürstenwalde are converted into small galleries and artists in the region are given the opportunity of presenting their works to a broad public. A former bakery becomes the venue for ceramics, sculptures and paintings to be sold at Christmas, and neighbours, inhabitants and tourists are invited to take a look.

The idea of "Art not Emptiness" arose in 2005 from the Future for the District (ZIS) programme of the town of Fürstenwalde and is being continued with the support of the Local Agenda 21 through the "Kuenstlerhandwerk" group. During the exhibitions the artists offer courses for all age groups to encourage participation. The aim is to enrich the cultural life of the town of 32,000 inhabitants and to bring new life to the town centre. It has worked: so far all the commercial spaces have found commercial tenants as a result of the amateur gallery owners' temporary presence. The actions create space for new ideas and help to reduce the number of buildings standing vacant.

Meanwhile an independent association, Kuenstlerhandwerk e.V., has been formed to both organise the temporary events and to manage its own rooms on a permanent basis and hold exhibitions there.

The artists themselves take turns to man the exhibitions, which allows them direct contact with the public.

All the long-term artists come from the Fürstenwalde region; their objects are unique. Together with the exhibition spaces, some artists also provide options for day-care centres or schools or for private groups or older people. Special framework conditions have been created specifically for people with low incomes, encouraging them to be creative and to present their artistic efforts.

**[www.la21-fuerstenwalde.de](http://www.la21-fuerstenwalde.de)**



*Art not Emptiness – opening the 2008 exhibition*



*Picnic and land use planning at Allmende-Kontor, a pioneering space on the site of the former Tempelhof Airport*

## Participatory urban development – making use of creative ideas

The diverse requirements of local actors can best be agreed where people are directly included in the local planning process and can develop their ideas, for example, with the aid of professionally organised planning or future workshops. Such approaches have been continually expanded in recent decades and also supported by government initiatives such as the “Healthy Cities Network” and the “Social City” programme.

In many places, however, local people are also trying to make use of empty spaces in the cityscape and to develop them creatively. Intercultural and organic municipal gardens are one of the best-known examples of this. Following the example of the community gardens that were set up in the early 1970s by local people in New York on urban wasteland, a large

number of similar community gardens have appeared in Germany since the mid-1990s.

From the outset these projects were aimed, in addition to their environmental and amenity aspects, at strengthening social interaction and intercultural competence. By working together in the garden, contact was facilitated between people of different social and cultural backgrounds, language barriers were overcome and an understanding of different cultural identities was created. Many of the more than 120 community gardens across Germany have developed from the initiatives of local people in cooperation with Agenda 21 groups and local government. In Berlin this innovative concept is already on the way towards being included in the urban planning process.

## Innovative interim use – Berlin sets a new course

→ As a culturally diverse and green metropolis, Berlin is in constant upheaval and is thus also an attractive centre for experimentation as an “urban space laboratory”.

This has been taken into account in considering the re-use of the inner-city Tempelhof airport, closed since 2009. The best way to shape and use the roughly 390 hectares of land is one of the capital's biggest tasks for the future. Berlin's inhabitants are being asked to be creative and suggest innovative ideas. The city council itself is creating new opportunities and making large numbers of spaces available for pioneering and interim uses. Innovative projects and those with a sustainability orientation will have the possibility of creating attractive leisure and recreation and to put new business, social and cultural concepts into practice. Many areas of wasteland and reclaimed land are already used around the city for interim purposes. On the former airport land, known as the Tempelhofer Freiheit, however, an experiment will be conducted for the first time of specifically integrating pioneering land uses into the local planning process.

Allmende-Kontor is one of these pilot civil society projects. Created from a wide network of activists from various community gardens in Berlin and various urban agriculture projects, the initiative has drawn together more than 700 participants of various nationalities and social groups in just the project's garden that has been established here. Going beyond its own garden, the objective of Allmende-Kontor is to establish itself as a learning centre with a networking and advice point for the numerous community-organised garden initiatives in Berlin, and to embody and support participatory involvement in urban development, climate change mitigation, urban ecology and biodiversity. The project also intends to set up an equipment

pool and a store for the preservation and exchange of seeds obtained from the gardens. Urban public space will be brought into public awareness and brought to life in the Allmende-Kontor garden on the Tempelhofer Freiheit through community use and design as a community asset (Allmende).

Another pioneering project entitled “Plattenvereinigung” – implying a “reunification” of building materials from former East and West Berlin – is taking place in cooperation with the TU Berlin and “zukunftsgeraeusche GbR” and funded by the German Environmental Foundation (DBU). A temporary mobile building, acting as medium, teaching aid and events space, has been built from re-used concrete parts taken from former East and West German prefabricated buildings. The building serves as a training site for construction apprentices and as a teaching object for students and professional training. An interdisciplinary and cultural programme is also at the centre of the project, aimed at creating a broad discussion on the topics of recycling culture and urban development and to link actors together.

The time available for these interim uses is limited. The open spaces on the former airport territory will change, because in 2009 Berlin was awarded the contract for holding the International Garden Show (IGA) in 2017, which will be held on the Tempelhof airfield. It may be possible for some of the pioneering projects to be integrated into the IGA and afterwards take root as permanent organisations; at this point such developments are uncertain. They depend not least on the willingness of the city administration to cooperate closely with its civil-society actors. In any case, a promising start has been made.

**[www.tempelhoferfreiheit.de/mitgestalten/pionierprojekte](http://www.tempelhoferfreiheit.de/mitgestalten/pionierprojekte)**



*Garden design at Allmende-Kontor Berlin*

## Intercultural cooperation – looking for opportunities in everyday life

The diversity of cultures, languages and life experiences is a wealth that cities and towns can put to active use. Many communities include migrants who are already bringing their knowledge and skills to bear in creating sustainable development. A number

of communities have also developed, together with local actors, suitable forms of address and involvement that specifically offer people from other cultures ways to connect to their everyday environment, thereby promoting a shared community life.

## Aalen – flavours of the world

→ Aalen is a town of 67,000 inhabitants situated close to Stuttgart, the capital of Baden-Württemberg. The residents of Aalen come from 117 countries. Good relations between the many cultures is an important issue for the local people, who are also looking for ways to make an uncomplicated, mutual understanding possible. An example of this is coming together to prepare dishes from different nations as a means of getting to know other cultures, without necessarily knowing many words of their languages. The Culture Kitchen Aalen association, formed from the local Agenda 21 processes, has put this idea into practice with flair and organised many international culinary encounters. Here people who have settled in Aalen from elsewhere can share recipes from their homelands. A unique cookbook has resulted. “Aalen is(s)t international” (the title a word-play on international identity and international cuisine) was launched at the Aalen town hall in 2011 and has become a local bestseller.

The idea was developed during an international picnic in the International Garden – itself an integration project set up by Culture Kitchen that has been running successfully since 2005. The cookbook presents not only recipes but also the people and groups who have worked on producing it.

The book, together with the rest of Culture Kitchen’s activities, represents the cultural diversity in Aalen and provides a positive sign for the local integration process.

**[www.kulturkueche-aalen.de](http://www.kulturkueche-aalen.de)**



*Integration facilitators in Hanover are also qualified as environmental facilitators, in cooperation with the Lower Saxony regional capital's Agenda 21 office*



*Culture Kitchen Aalen – cooking Tamil dishes together*

Intercultural cooperation works best when people work together to build and shape something, and in doing so are able to communicate their own culture and develop an understanding for other cultures. Low-threshold access approaches such as the cooking and gardening sessions make it easier to get started and open the door for more extensive activities.

In Hanover too, migrants have long been integrated into Agenda 21 processes – a model worthy of imitation. This long-term experience in Hanover shows that such activities support and facilitate the integration process. ■

## Hanover supports integration – for climate change mitigation too

➔ Back in June 1995 Hanover City Council agreed to the objectives of Agenda 21. Following this decision a community Agenda 21 office was set up. This has subsequently enabled numerous projects to be implemented both inside and outside local government. Moreover, Hanover has long been active in climate change mitigation and is also committed to sustainable development in other areas. In 2011 the city was honoured as the European Capital of Biodiversity and also the Capital of Fair Trade.

Its guiding principles of sustainability were broadcast by Agenda 21 newspapers, websites, numerous events, and by the Agenda 21 Plenum. Since the Agenda 21 dialogue began, community actors have ensured that migrants are included in sustainability activities and that intercultural aspects are taken into consideration. For this purpose representatives from various disciplines have established an intercultural working group for participation and involvement that also works with migrants' organisations. This promotes the participation and voluntary involvement of people from other countries in a variety of activities, including those related to protecting the environment. Information in multiple languages, for example on waste separation, efficient heating, energy saving, health and the environment and on fair trade, provide support for migrant members of the community for their everyday actions. These aids are accompanied by a variety of activities such as visits, talks or water festivals.

In addition to distributing information materials, the group concentrates on the direct involvement, qualifications and provision of advice to migrants. These people can then act as multipliers within their cultural experiences and lifestyles, seeking out other people from their cultural background, passing on to them what they have learned and sensitising them to environmental issues.

A project was initiated in 2000, led by the Agenda 21 office and the Office for Intercultural Issues that provided migrants with a qualification over two years as environmental advisors for migrants. When the project ended, a number of the participants set up an association named Migrants for Agenda 21. This group is dedicated primarily to the promotion of health, environmental protection in the home and responsible actions as consumers. In 2005 the city commissioned an advice campaign entitled "Climate protection advice for migrants by migrants" that addressed issues of climate change mitigation, quality of life and the reduction of utility costs, in which unemployed migrants were trained to become environmental advisors. In 2009, in cooperation with the adult education college, the Agenda 21 office and Migrants for Agenda 21, integration facilitators were trained and qualified as environmental facilitators.

The project "From Change of Values to Values of Change" is another participation and education project whose objectives include resource conservation and waste avoidance as well as the development of sustainable products with appropriate marketing, and which also pursues the aim of establishing small business opportunities. This project was distinguished in 2005 as an initiative of the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

Migrants get involved on a voluntary basis in a variety of ways in associations, initiatives and projects. A degree of professional guidance is sometimes necessary to support their voluntary activities since networks must be created and coordinated. In Hanover this important support element is also provided by the community Agenda 21 office.

**[www.agenda21.de](http://www.agenda21.de)**

## 6 Involving civil society: a resource for innovation

**People get involved in their local community when opportunities for participation are offered that are meaningful to them. How can members of the public bring their skills, experience, contacts and interests to bear on forming the cultural shift? How do communities use the commitment of civil society, and what options for involvement have they created for it?**

→ The involvement of civil society in local policymaking has a long tradition in Germany. In certain instances of urban renewal and renovation, local people have been asked about their requirements and were actively involved in the planning and user-friendly design of their residential areas since the late 1970s.

The tasks that communities must undertake for sustainable development are however far more extensive and more radical. Experience indicates that solutions for these complex challenges can only be mastered through the collaboration of policy-making, government, academia and civil society.

Civil society plays a particularly important role because it is anchored in the everyday environment and has creative power. Involvement by civil society is based on a variety of professional, social and cultural backgrounds. In other words, members of a community can bring a diverse mixture of resources, potentials and skills to the creating of a more sustainable living environment. It is necessary to tap these resources and to nurture them.

### Discovering and promoting local civil society participation through competitions

Community competitions are particularly important for developing and communicating sustainability-based approaches and ideas, and these are held in a variety of areas. Owing to the public attention that they gain, they also help to promote civil society involvement and also create a dialogue between community and federal levels.

The Federal Ministry for the Environment, together with the Service Agency: Municipal Climate Protection (based at the German Institute for Urban Development) is therefore holding the Community Climate Protection Competition for the fourth time in 2012. The competition is funded by the National Climate Initiative and is aimed at communities and regions that have made particularly significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions through successful measures, strategies and actions. To ensure comparability between the candidates, the prizes are awarded in three categories. Alongside “Innovative technical and building measures” and “Innovative climate protection strategies”, recognition is also explicitly given to “Actions for involving local people”. A new record was set in 2011: more than 230 high-quality projects were submitted and three prize-winners selected in each category. Success in the competition brings further obligation, since the prize money is invested by the communities in new climate protection measures.



*Winners of the 2011 Capital of Fair Trade competition in the old town district of Marburg*

One of the 2011 prize-winners is the town of Bollewick, situated in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Here a functioning cooperation network has been set up that is paving the often difficult way towards a low-carbon bioenergy village. Since 2009, sixty-eight municipalities and various organisations have joined the network. As the network continues to grow, the entire region benefits and environmental protection is actively boosted.

Through the nationwide Community Climate Protection Competition local communities have the opportunity to present successful climate protection projects to a broad public and letting them serve as examples for others to emulate. In addition, the winners are given support from the Service Agency: Municipal Climate Protection for the publicity work for their award-winning projects.

Since 2003 the national Service Agency: Communities in One World, with financing from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, has conferred the title Capital of Fair Trade (see [www.service-eine-welt.de](http://www.service-eine-welt.de)).

This award is made every two years and is given to communities that practice globally responsible trade in their own institutions, inspire their residents with fair trade and put the idea into practice with high levels of involvement and imagination. Professionally supported competitions of this type bring results. The service agency can list significantly increasing numbers of applications each time the Capital of Fair Trade competition is announced. It has thus been possible in recent years to bring the issue into a large number of communities all over the country.

Similar positive outcomes for community involvement have been demonstrated by community competitions in other areas also. For example, German Environmental Aid (DUH), in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, the Federal Environment Agency and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation have announced Capital of Biodiversity and Capital of Climate Protection competitions. These competitions demonstrate that communities which pursue a broad approach to sustainability, such as Heidelberg or Hanover, tend to be among the first prize-winners.



*Winners of the 2011 ZeitzeicheN Prize at the 5th Netzwerk21Kongress in Hanover*

By inviting entries in different size categories, more medium-sized and smaller communities are also attracted to participate and to gain recognition for their years of hard work.

An annual competition is also held as part of the Netzwerk21Kongress with prizes awarded in a number of categories. The advisory committee of the Netzwerk21Kongress awards the ZeitzeicheN ("Sign of the Times") Prize to communities for outstanding initiatives, amongst other things for particularly good collaboration between all their participants, the involvement of civil society and a strategic approach to sustainability. Community prize-winners in the past have been Neumarkt in der Oberpfalz, Ludwigsburg, Solingen, Nordhausen, Bonn and the Steinfurt district.

Competitions to promote sustainable development in the community are however not only encouraged and awarded by policy-making or administrative bodies. Regional businesses and other economic agents have an interest in sustainable towns and cities, an intact environment and a stable social and economic structure. Accordingly, they also initiate competitions in some regions to promote the involvement of civil society and to make innovative ideas more widely known.

A nationwide competition is currently being organised by the "dm" pharmacy chain in cooperation with the UN Decade of Education. In this the company acts not only as the sponsor but is also active in spreading sustainability ideas and revealed to be a pioneer itself.

## Ideas, Initiative, Future – engaging business in sustainable development

➔ From a nature detective to a multigenerational house – since 2008 the “dm-drogerie-markt” chain of chemist shops and the German UNESCO Commission have supported innovative ideas for the future as part of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. More than 3,800 ideas and projects have been funded by the involvement of the two partners so far. The dm company has additionally provided funds of about €4.4 million. The common objectives are to support people who wish to make something happen from their ideas, to make the matter of sustainability better known in the public sphere and to facilitate sustainable dealings in environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions.

In the Ideas, Initiative, Future sustainability competition the two cooperation partners awarded prizes in 2010/11 to particularly good project ideas that make a contribution to improving the quality of life of present and future generations. When the initiative continued into 2011/12, the roughly 1,300 dm chemist shops were once again converted into temporary points of encounter for the issue of sustainability. The participants presented their projects in the dm shops and informed the public about their activities through discussions with interested customers. The free dm customer magazine “alverde” was published to accompany the event in 143 different regional edi-

tions and presented selected Ideas, Initiative, Future projects from the corresponding region. The high point was a Germany-wide “cashier campaign”, during which the project representatives worked at the checkouts of the dm shops. The revenue generated was then entirely donated to the projects.

In its own area of business dm also takes responsibility as a company for a sustainable society. Accordingly, organic baby food, natural cosmetics and recycled toilet paper are among the products it offers. An environmentally friendly woollen bag is available for a deposit from the checkout; this can be returned or replaced if required. At the beginning of 2012 the company had also converted the electricity supply of its 1,300 shops, the distribution centres and the head office in Karlsruhe entirely to a green supplier. The electricity supplier is the independent Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS).

This signal effect can also be passed on to dm’s customers, who can change their domestic supply to green electricity with a starter package from EWS in the Black Forest or LichtBlick in Hamburg. When the customer signs up, he or she also receives a dm gift card worth €50. Since the starter packages were introduced in 2011, 3,200 households have changed over to green electricity by this method.  
**[www.projekte.ideen-initiative-zukunft.de](http://www.projekte.ideen-initiative-zukunft.de)**



*Ideas, Initiative, Future is presented at the 5th Netzwerk21Kongress in Hanover*



*Presentation of the “Open Meeting Point” project in a dm shop in Bretten, project representative and dm customer discussing the special issue of “alverde”*

## Developing a sustainable participatory culture and using the innovative power of civil society involvement

The participatory approach to civil society in Germany received a significant boost through the resolutions of the 1992 Rio conference and the subsequent Agenda 21 process, together with other similar strategies. Communities were called upon to involve their members continually in community development processes and to identify problem situations in collaboration with them and local actors and to jointly develop and implement guiding principles, strategies and programmes for the future. Many towns and cities have responded to the call and together with local

actors have introduced a community learning process that continues to evolve today.

Communities that seek to enable and strengthen citizen participation frequently find innovative solutions to key community problems. This relationship can be seen in towns and cities that have a well-established Agenda 21 process or another sustainable programme for the future that provides for extensive participation by the public.

### Neumarkt steers a course for sustainability

→ Neumarkt, in the Upper Palatinate, lies within the metropolitan region of Nuremberg, has a long-established Agenda 21 process and has regularly updated the city's mission statement with a local sustainability strategy since 2002. This forms the basis of a broad sustainability process and the implementation of numerous projects.

Neumarkt is home to about 40,000 inhabitants and has a special sustainability culture. From the outset, locally based businesses, some of them with operations worldwide, have been involved and are moving the sustainable development of the region forward. In 2001 the Neumarkter Lammsbräu organic brewery was awarded the Environmental Award of the German Environmental Foundation (DBU) and used the prize money to instigate sustainable added value: it invested the prize money in a new bottle-washing facility that consumes less water and energy and used the money it thus saved to create its own €10,000 annual sustainability prize to persons who act for sustainable development. This then brings benefit back to the community.

In Neumarkt, community involvement and participation are important factors. In 2007 the city was the first German community to receive an award within the framework of the UN Decade of Education and has meanwhile received the title UN Decade Community three times. Neumarkt is also the "No. 1 Fair Trade City in Bavaria" and is equally active on the issues of climate change mitigation and renewable energy. The community has produced its own energy use and climate protection road maps for the entire city and aims to be climate neutral by 2050. Key projects to this end are planned investments by Neumarkt's municipal utilities in the construction of wind turbines and also of a biomass heat and power system with a heat output of 40 GW/a. A new research and development centre with innovative young companies also provides an important impetus "along the road to a climate-neutral city".

Since 2008 new impulses for the city have also been generated by the citizen-orientated annual sustainability conference. Neumarkt has continued to develop its Agenda 21 process successfully over many years and so remains one of the pioneering communities for comprehensive, participatory sustainable development.

**[www.neumarkter-nachhaltigkeitskonferenz.de](http://www.neumarkter-nachhaltigkeitskonferenz.de)**



*Eighty children, together with the mayor, plant trees in the Neumarkt city park as part of a "Plant for the Planet Academy", giving a clear sign for greater climate justice*

Sustainability can only become really effective when it is lived by people in the community. Communities provide the necessary space for experimentation in this. It is also important to support participatory processes and to give recognition to the participants and grant them distinctions where appro-

priate. Appreciation of citizen participation is particularly important in order to retain and renew motivation in the long term. Many communities, for example, award an Agenda 21 or sustainability prize in recognition of the work done on their behalf.



*Neumarkt Sustainability Conference*

## Appreciation of community involvement – Leipzig's Agenda 21 Prize

→ Since the late 1990s the city of Leipzig has had an active Agenda 21 process supported by the community. The Leipzig Agenda 21 "Visions and Programme for a Long-term Liveable and Live-ly City" was agreed in 2000 by the actors involved. Subsequently over 100 institutions signed a declaration to implement the agenda. Along with the community, participants include numerous civil society organisations, academic institutions and businesses. The Leipzig Agenda considers itself to be an open movement of Leipzig's citizens together with private and public institutions.

As a mark of appreciation for the hard work put in by many local actors and also to maintain efforts in the long term, the city has awarded an Agenda Prize in various categories since 1999. The prize is awarded in cooperation with the city's utilities (Stadtwerken Leipzig GmbH), Verbundnetz GAS AG (VNG), the Leipzig savings bank (Sparkasse Leipzig) and the "Citizens for Leipzig" foundation. As well as the public recognition, the prizes involve sums of money that are used by civil society initiatives to implement further innovative projects. The Agenda Prize is used in Leipzig to promote working together with migrants. In 2001 the Brückenschlag (Bridge-building) association



*Presenting the Leipzig Agenda Prize, 2009*

won the prize for its "Colourful Gardens Leipzig" project. Here refugees and locals work together to run a former market garden. At the same time, language-learning courses and professional qualifications are offered. Intercultural gardens have now become a model of success. In Leipzig the approach was tried out early on and has received awards.

[www.le-agenda.de](http://www.le-agenda.de)

## Civil society involvement brings creative solutions to community development

The willingness for, and now increasingly the demand for, involvement by civil society actors is large, as the results of various studies show, including the most recent study of environmental awareness by the Federal Environment Agency. (see: [www.umweltbundesamt.de/umweltbewusstsein](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/umweltbewusstsein)).

Citizens are bringing resources such as time, money, knowledge, creativity, visionary thinking, pedagogical skills and manual flair more and more actively to the shaping of community issues. Their involve-

ment must not go to waste, not even when they develop ideas and projects that go further than had been previously envisaged by local government planning. Often local people know very well what is important in their living environments and how, and with whom, improvements can be made. This knowledge is an important resource for the future, including for larger projects and despite a lack of financial resources at community level, as the example of the Bavarian town of Markt Neunkirchen am Brand shows.

## Markt Neunkirchen am Brand – good cooperation between Agenda and community makes a joint shaping of public space feasible

➡ For a long time the inhabitants of the Upper Franconian municipality of Markt Neunkirchen am Brand had wanted to build a large multi-function space – an area for children and young people to skate, play ball games and ride bicycles. The idea arose from a citizen questionnaire in 2000 about desired improvements in the town, organised by the voluntary Agenda Working Group.

The local people remained stubborn even when the likelihood of realising the project was in doubt for a long time owing to lack of funds. On its own the municipality could not provide the money required for construction of the space. Then the local people started making up-front contributions. Numerous such contributions were received through the independent Agenda movement and paid into a dedicated community bank account. By 2009 this had reached a stage at which the local council, persuaded by the success of the fundraising, agreed to the multi-function space being built and provided the remaining funds needed.

At this point the round tables were set up again to realise the project, and young people in particular were invited to give their ideas for the actual design of the space. But how can the wishes of young people be realised with limited financial resources? Here again, the Agenda and council between them found a common approach. The young people were told about the specific framework conditions and constraining circumstances of the planning; they then developed creative and low-cost proposals. For example, corrugated concrete surfaces were provided that are suitable for skating and at the same time mitigate noise levels. Skaters could thus use specially designed surfaces from the outset, before other work could be completed, dependent on additional financial contributions received later. Local businesses gave both contributions of money and also in kind, by lending construction equipment such as diggers and shovels free of charge.

The Agenda 21 working group enjoys a wide level of trust from the community of 8,000 people. They are independent actors who at the same time work closely together with policy-makers and local government. The local administration not only makes use of citizen participation but also supports it actively. Accordingly, the work of the Agenda 21 working group is intermeshed with the local government and policy-makers through regular coordination meetings, and since 2008 the voluntary coordinator of the Agenda group has had the right to speak in the council. On the basis of this good cooperation it is possible for new paths to be found and for complex ideas to be realised together.

[www.neunkirchen-am-brand.de/agenda21](http://www.neunkirchen-am-brand.de/agenda21)



*Ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the multi-function area*

## Promoting civil society involvement and enabling sharing – the participatory budget model

Facing limited financial resources at the local level but also many demands for investment, local decision-makers are increasingly forced to set priorities for budget planning that, for example, gain the widest possible agreement among all actors despite cut-backs being made. One model that has proved meaningful and effective in this situation is that of the participatory budget. In a participatory budget, the local people participate directly in decisions about selected financial issues within their own community.

The first such participatory budget was introduced in 1989 in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. The process has been in use in German communities since 1999 and is now becoming more and more widespread. Now some sixty-five communities have a participatory budget and such an arrangement is under discussion in a further hundred or so (see: Federal Agency for Civic Education, Service Agency: Communities in One World: Participatory Budgets in Germany, Status report 2011).

In maintaining a participatory budget, only the voluntary actions of a community can generally be influenced. Therefore only areas of expenditure that are not prescribed and tied by law can be discussed and agreed within the participatory budget.



*"Participatory budgets: experiences and prospects", an event in Weimar in 2011*

Recognised criteria for participatory budgets are a multi-level participation process and a continuation of the model. These include, in addition to substantiated information about the goals, content and possibilities for participation, above all an open process of discussion in which local people give their vote on specific budget items and can also actively bring their own proposals. Important here are low-threshold and user-friendly means of access that take into account different age groups and social backgrounds. Town hall meetings, written surveys and internet forums provide suitable formats. In addition the community should in each case give account of the extent to which the proposals expressed in the process will be taken up and implemented.

The introduction of a participatory budget then becomes promising when in addition to the public interest in the discussion of budgetary issues, broad political support is given. Also necessary are qualified and committed staff members in the administration who can manage the process and answer questions with specialist competence.



## Jena – a pioneer in participatory budgets

➔ In the autumn of 2006 the city council of Jena in Thuringia decided to introduce a participatory budget. Following the development of a participation concept, a first brochure was created to inform local people about the current budget situation and the planned participatory process. Under the heading “Participatory budget: in Jena you are part of the decision”, the online presence of the city council was also expanded to include the participatory process. Along with this, town hall meetings were held that both provided information about the process and also provided a discussion forum for key subjects such as debt reduction, family policy and urban development. In 2008 the population then had its first opportunity to play its part in the community’s decision making process.

The process is now well established and has been modified each year and constantly improved. The possibilities for participation are diverse. The core element is an annual survey in which 15,000 questionnaires are sent to randomly selected residents on the electoral roll. A new brochure is prepared for each new participatory budget, which gives information about the process, its limits, priority areas and the results of the last participatory budget.

The Jena participatory budget is largely developed and its content maintained by an open working group of volunteers. Technical support and coordination of the participatory budget is provided by the finance department of the City Council. Indeed this close cooperation between the citizens’ working group and the city administration is vital for success, as is also a fixed budget that is made available for the participatory process each year. The financial support is also justified by the fact that with the help of the participatory budget, debt reduction of the city is deliberately accelerated and a sustainable finance policy that is fair to all generations is promoted.

The participatory budget is accompanied and annually evaluated by the Jena University of Applied Sciences. This procedure assures the quality of the process and increases trust between all participants. Because of the high level of transparency of community financial issues, many local people have been willing to participate in the process. Even though the final budgetary policy decisions are then taken by the City Council, the latter is becoming increasingly responsible for ensuring that the citizens’ proposals are heard and incorporated.

Jena has become a sought-after representative of participatory budgets for other communities and provides an example of a process worthy of imitation far beyond the regional boundaries of Thuringia. With the founding of the Thuringia Participatory Budget Network, additional networking with other communities should occur who also want to adopt a participatory budget in the short, medium or long term.

[www.jena.de](http://www.jena.de) > Bürgerhaushalt



*Title page of the 2011 Jena participatory budget*

## On the way to the citizens' community – from shared knowledge to shared decision-making

The development of a local culture of participation and joint responsibility is a radical learning process both for institutional actors and for civil society. Both sides must have knowledge of the procedure as well as being informed of the subject matter in order to make appropriate decisions, initiate promising projects and to be able to develop and implement

solutions. The culture of participation is an ongoing learning and professionalisation process. Some communities have already made a start using their own participatory concept that satisfies the requirements for the continual involvement of civil society into a sustainable urban development process.

### Augsburg – a lively LA 21 process with innovative participatory culture

→ The Local Agenda 21 process has been active in Augsburg for more than fifteen years and involves a wide cross-section of civil-society actors. The city places the participation in the direct focus of its own LA 21 activities. The motto "Sustainable development needs joint action" underlines the close cooperation between the local government and citizen institutions and groups. By comparison, only few communities across Germany can demonstrate such a long-lived and cooperation-orientated Agenda 21 process that has thus overcome many obstacles through the collaboration of civil society, policy and administration elements.

The success of the process rests on five pillars: the twenty-three agenda forums and their projects, the municipal office, the Agenda advisory committee, the programme of sustainability action and the Augsburg Future Award. The Agenda advisory committee was set up by resolution of the City Council in 1997 and its representatives are newly appointed every three years. In this committee some twenty important institutions of the urban society work together, advise the city on sustainability topics and communicate these into their own bodies. The committee makes decisions on applications from the agenda forums in which individuals, institutions and businesses are active, and gives recommendations to the City Council and administration. In 2011 the forums were running about thirty projects, some of which received financial support from the city. Since 2006 active

members of the public, initiatives, organisations, schools, businesses and church groups have also been able to compete with their work for sustainability or climate protection for the Augsburg Future Award, conferred annually by the city.

The various departments, agencies and enterprises owned by the city administration are implementing the programme of sustainability action within their areas of work. The community LA 21 office supports the administration in putting its sustainability efforts into practice. It is also the link between the many different areas of participation.

Building on the "Sustainability Guidelines" of 1998 and the "Sustainability Indicators" of 2000, the sustainability action programme was worked out in round table discussions. The City Council agreed it in June 2004 and in February 2011 decided unanimously to update it on the basis of the first sustainability report. As well as guidelines, the action programme also contains specific targets, which are evaluated using a set of indicators and indicate where progress has been made and where there is urgent need for action.

In the view of the persons involved, without the large reservoir of commitment and knowledge on the part of the many participants, the change towards sustainability could not have been achieved.

[www.agenda21.augsburg.de](http://www.agenda21.augsburg.de)



*Agenda 21 initiative in the town hall square in Augsburg*

A further possibility for anchoring participation also at a strategic level for developing and implementing sustainability goals is to introduce a sustainability audit of council proposals. This new local policy instrument of a sustainability audit is made plausible by the trend in which such audits are being carried out both at the regional level of Baden-Württemberg and in the federal government and the Bundestag (parliament), and more and more local government bodies are expressing interest in the concept. Because of the importance of monitoring and evaluation for an effective reorientation towards sustainability, the instrument of sustainability auditing will in future become more important still. ■



## Innovation in people's representation: sustainability auditing of council proposals promotes a culture of participation in Heidelberg

→ Heidelberg began to address sustainability at an early stage. This general orientation soon became a major issue and over time it has put down roots in more and more areas of the administration. Civil society actors were involved from the outset; there are networks in various areas of activity, and as a result of many factors, including the urban development plan STEP 2015 with its explicit orientation towards sustainability, this set of principles has gained a high level of acceptance. Many distinctions have confirmed the city's successes and have spurred the actors to undertake further activities.

An ever more far-reaching modelling tool was established in 2005 by a local council resolution: the sustainability auditing of council proposals. With this, information and resolution proposals would be examined and evaluated on the basis of the ninety-one goals of STEP prior to their being

used in consultation and decision-making by the council. The implementation of the audit is controlled by a regulation of the mayor. Every two years a report is prepared that up to now has received very high acceptance in the administration. The carrying out of sustainability audits of council proposals is a contribution to developing local government in a more sustainable direction and in particular to making complex and unintentional outcomes of planning, decisions and longer-term developments of a local administration more transparent. With decision-making documents enhanced in this way, planning processes can be qualified and "safeguarded".

Within the framework of sustainability auditing, the aspect of participation is continually evaluated and ensured.

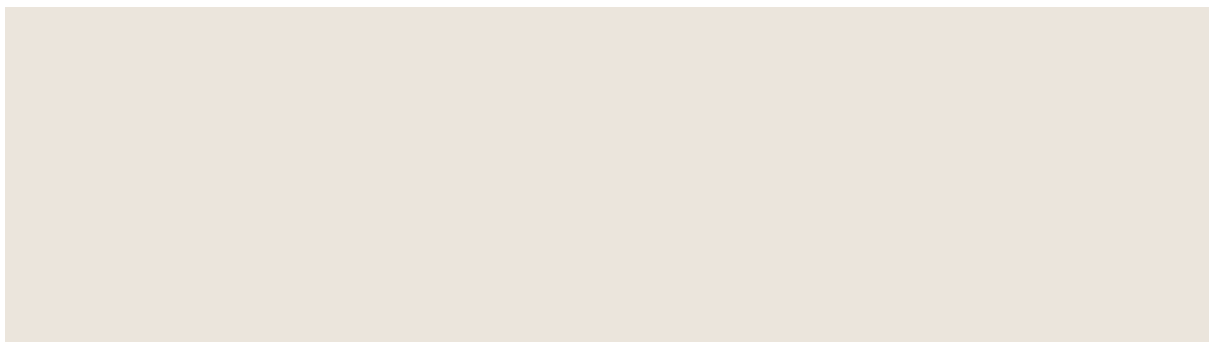
**[www.heidelberg.de](http://www.heidelberg.de) > lokale Agenda**



*Founding the German "Covenant of Mayors" club in Heidelberg, 2011*



*Session of the Heidelberg local council*



## 7 Building Sustainability: setting a course for sustainable development

→ The experiences of local government and its local actors offer a major opportunity for dealing with the growing tasks and for implementing the principle of sustainable development on the level of society as a whole. Many innovative projects have an impact beyond the local level, particularly where these have been developed together with local people and offer convincing approaches to solutions that are also suitable for widespread transfer elsewhere. The examples of an energy transition organised at local and regional level makes this particularly evident.

Nevertheless, there is no single “royal road” towards establishing sustainable development. On the contrary, many innovative approaches may be found of how local communities – against backgrounds of specific conditions in each case – seek to master these complex tasks. To publicise these approaches and experiences and to win other communities with whom to collaborate, empowerment and networking are crucial.

In various respects, communities have formulated central insights and standards and also set requirements that are important for sustainable development at the local level. Thus at the 2010 Netzwerk-21Kongress 2010 the “Nuremberg Declaration” and a “Position paper for the improvement of vertical integration” were agreed, and in Hanover in 2011 the Rio+20 Declaration was accepted by the six hundred participants in the congress; this declaration should provide impetus for the German delegation to the UN summit on sustainable development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012.

With the title “Much achieved, more to do”, the communities and local actors refer in the Rio+20 Declaration to the principle that sustainable development must occur above all at the local level and that the deep changes it effects should also be measurable. The necessary social and environmental shifts in the economy and society can only be achieved by the joint efforts of policy-making, administration, business and civil society, and such efforts should



*The mayor of Heidelberg sets out the strategic corner points for strategic development in communities to the Council for sustainable development.*

be intensified. Concerning the cultural shift for the transformation process, the actors also assign major importance to the aspects of participation and citizen involvement. Communities are important elements for sustainable development. As for the groundbreaking developments at the local level, these deserve still more recognition and attention in the future. (See: [www.rioplus20kongress.de/erklaerung](http://www.rioplus20kongress.de/erklaerung))

In addition to the Netzwerk21Kongress, the Council for Sustainable Development, as an independent advisory committee of the federal government, has initiated direct working relationships with local government and published documents on community sustainability development as part of its “Dialogues with Mayors” that contain the central insights and requirements of local communities. The core requirements are the same as those that are also formulated in the declarations of the Netzwerk21Kongress and in the nationwide survey of the Rio+20 in the Community research project. The community actors consider the following conditions to be particularly beneficial for local sustainable development:

- Sustainability should be integrated into local government activity as a task that involves all groups and as a policy guideline.
- In this process a shared guiding vision and quality objectives should be developed, and regular monitoring on the basis of suitable indicators carried out.
- In the course of sustainable urban development, public participation should be continually offered.
- In order for the tasks to be fulfilled, improvements to the legal framework conditions for local communities and the securing of sufficient financial resources at local level are required.
- Sustainable development requires agreement both between communities and also between the local, regional and national levels. A continuous dialogue process should therefore be established.

The developing and implementation of a comprehensive Local Agenda 21 or a community sus-

tainability strategy with the core elements of guiding visions, objectives, programme of actions and regular monitoring is one way in which some of the communities in Germany are already moving towards shaping the transformation processes here and now. The communities have good reasons for citing scenarios such as the example given by the British economist Sir Nicolas Stern concerning climate policy, that early action requires comparatively little financial resources, whereas "business as usual" and procrastination will result in greatly increased costs.

The effort required for a social and cultural shift to sustainable development are comparable with those of other transitions in history, such as industrialisation. The cooperative participation of all actors (good governance) is necessary for the necessary transformation to be deliberately effected. The community level offers interesting approaches to this and highly successful examples that can also be used as motivation for other administrative levels.

A degree of emulation is possible and worthwhile – for the people of today and in the future. ■



*Agenda building blocks of the city of Augsburg*

## 8 Appendix

The research project “Rio+20 on site – the current situation and future prospects for local sustainability processes in Germany” was conducted by the Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment GmbH (IZT) in Berlin and the following co-operating partners:

- ▶ **ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability**  
[www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)
- ▶ **FEST – Protestant Institute for Interdisciplinary Research**  
[www.fest-heidelberg.de](http://www.fest-heidelberg.de)
- ▶ **Philipps Universität Marburg/ ISInova – Institute for Social Innovation**  
[www.isinova.org](http://www.isinova.org)
- ▶ **Institut Futur at the Freie Universität Berlin**  
[www.institutfutur.de](http://www.institutfutur.de)
- ▶ **LAG 21 – State of North Rhine Westfalia Agenda 21 Cooperation Project**  
[www.lag21.de](http://www.lag21.de)
- ▶ **ThiNK – Thuringen State Institute for Sustainability and Climate Protection**  
[www.think-jena.de](http://www.think-jena.de)
- ▶ **Universität Bayreuth, Department of Urban and Regional Development**  
[www.stadtregion.uni-bayreuth.de](http://www.stadtregion.uni-bayreuth.de)

The results of the nationwide survey on LA 21 and sustainability activities at community level are given in detail in the final report. This contains both a quantitative evaluation of the results and also a systematisation and analysis of responses with content. Using detailed case studies, drivers and innovation factors for sustainable development are clarified, and prospects for LA 21 and the sustainability process at local community level are indicated.

In addition to the nationwide study, a number of specific partial studies were also compiled as part of the research by the cooperating partners. These are available in the form of experts' reports on specific spheres of activity, region studies on North Rhine-Westphalia, Thuringia and Bavaria, and a study on LA 21 and sustainability processes at the international level.

All research outcomes are available for download from the project's home page. ([www.izt.de/rio](http://www.izt.de/rio))

### Selected further links:

**Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety**  
[www.bmu.de](http://www.bmu.de)

**Federal Environment Agency**  
[www.uba.de](http://www.uba.de)

**German Environmental Foundation (DBU)**  
[www.dbu.de](http://www.dbu.de)

**Netzwerk21Kongress**  
[www.netzwerk21kongress.de](http://www.netzwerk21kongress.de)

**Council for Sustainable Development**  
[www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de](http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de) >Dialog nachhaltige Stadt

**Service Agency: Municipal Climate Protection**  
[www.kommunaler-klimaschutz.de](http://www.kommunaler-klimaschutz.de)

**Service Agency: Communities in One World**  
[www.service-eine-welt.de](http://www.service-eine-welt.de)

**German Environmental Aid**  
[www.duh.de](http://www.duh.de)

**ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Sustainability Management Instruments**  
[www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)>management instruments



