

The AGENDA 21 Process in Germany

by Kerstin Bernecker ¹, January 2002

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Background to A 21

One major outcome of the “Earth Summit” for environment and development” 1992 in Rio was the “AGENDA 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development” (subsequently called “Rio-AGENDA 21” or “Rio-A 21”), which is supported and signed by more than 170 nations. The major rationale behind this programme is the fact that the different development paths – in the developing world as well as in the so-called “developed world” – have turned out to be unsustainable: Accordingly, the preamble of the Rio-A 21 says:

1.3 Agenda 21 addresses the pressing problems of today and also aims at preparing the world for the challenges of the next century. It reflects a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environment cooperation. Its successful implementation is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments. National strategies, plans, policies and processes are crucial in achieving this. International cooperation should support and supplement such efforts. In this context, the United Nations system has a key role to play...”

Chapter 28, “Local authorities’ initiatives in support of Agenda 21” calls upon the local authorities to play their – crucial – role in this process:

28.3 Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopt “a local Agenda 21”. Through consultation and consensus building, local authorities would learn from citizensand acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted....”

Hence, the (Rio) AGENDA 21 is a global policy

- which implies “national strategies, plans, policies and processes” as well as monitoring,
- which counts on the contribution and participation of all administrative levels from the national level downward – down to the people,
- which covers all relevant issues of environment and development,
- which is presented in 4 major sections (“Social and Economic Dimensions”, “Conservation and Management of Resources for Development”, “Strengthening the Role of Major Groups”, “Means of Implementation”) with 40 chapters on the whole.

The basic concept of AGENDA 21 is achieving sustainability by integrating environment and development on the basis of a global partnership among the nations. I.e. the “Leitbild” (kind of Guiding Principle) of AGENDA 21 is sustainability, to be achieved through an integrated approach respecting the social, environmental and economic requirements in a “One world system”.

1.2 Specificities of Germany

Each country is requested to participate in the AGENDA 21 process. Here we will now consider “the case Germany”. Germany is an industrialised country, covering some 357 000 km², with a population of about 82 million and a population growth rate of almost 0%. The population density of some 230 inhabitants/km² is very high for a larger country. Nearly 10% of the population are foreigners.

¹ Kerstin Bernecker (economist, physicist) is an independant consultant, working since 25 years mainly in developing countries (but also Germany, Switzerland, Japan...). She is specialized as advisor and facilitator on the conflict areas “man-nature/environment” since a few years on Agenda-21 processes. Address: Conrad-Schulz-Weg 9, D-82211 Herrsching; E-mail: KerstinBernecker@compuserve.com

² United Nations: AGENDA 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development. Rio/ New York 1992.

Politico-administratively, Germany is subdivided into 16 federal states which are administratively further sub-divided into some 14,300 municipalities and communities and 323 districts. They have a high political and administrative independence and quite different settlement and economic structures each:

- There are three “city-states” with population densities up to more than 3800 inhabitants/km² as one extreme and large “surface” states with less than 80 inhabitants/km² the least populated one³ – as the other extreme.
- The GDP is in the order of US\$ 2200 billion or about US\$ 26 000 per capita. Contribution from agriculture is 1,5% (employment in agriculture: 3%), from industry some 34% (employment 37%) and services beyond 64% (employment 60%).

A special potential in the German politico-administrative structure is a quite well developed communal self-management through community councils and community administrations, with a high autonomy of the communities. However, with the new challenges regarding sustainable development which require permanent learning and new know-how, this structure is reaching its limits. The necessary innovation can hardly be managed nowadays by the existing structures.

Infrastructure is highly developed, e.g.:

- A dense network of roads and highways exists, public transport with trains, buses, as well as trams and subways in the cities are available,
- the “car-density” is with an order of some 600 cars per 1000 inhabitants very high,
- the telecommunication network is dense and many-fold (fixed and mobile phone systems; high level of internet connections; cable, satellite and antenna tv and radio systems),
- about 97% of the households are connected to public water supply and waste water systems.

³ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, North-East of Germany; for the surface states; Nordrhein-Westfalen (North-Rhine-Westfalia) has the highest population density with more than 520 inhabitants/km².

⁴ See: The World Bank: World Development Report 2000. Washington 1999.

⁵ See e.g.: Dritte Welt Haus Bielefeld/ BUND/ Misereor: Entwicklungsland Deutschland – Umkehr zu einer global zukunftsfähigen Entwicklung. (Developing Country Germany – Return to Globally Sustainable Development). Wuppertal 1997.

Resource use is relatively high, e.g.:

- energy consumption⁴: some 350 million tons of oil equivalent are annually used, nearly 4.3 t per capita (for comparison: USA – 8 tons per capita, Japan – 4, Jordan – 1, India – 0.5, Ethiopia – 0.3);
- CO₂⁴ emission: about 860 million tons per year or 10.5 tons per capita – though decreasing, (USA – 20, Japan – 9.3 – increasing, India – 1.1, Ethiopia – 0.1);
- surface sealing (by new settlement for housing and economic activities, roads etc.): 120 ha per day; at present is more than 12% of the total surface of the country sealed;
- there is no deforestation, 27% of the area of the country are “nationally protected areas” (USA: 13.4%, Japan: 6.8%, India: 4.8%, Jordan: 3.4%, Ethiopia: 5.5%).

All in all, Germany’s development path is highly unsustainable – which also is true for the other European countries –, however not as unsustainable as the USA⁵.

In this Agenda 21 context of unsustainable development and the need for changing the development approach, the term “Developing Country Germany” was introduced⁶.

1.3 “Developing Country D” – The Need for Models in the Process

Various aspects make Germany an interesting example for an AGENDA 21 process:

- the hierarchically organised administrative structure – allowing well organised linking from bottom to top and vice versa (community-district-federal state-national level),
- Germany is among the first industrialised countries, disposing of production capacities with a very good reputation especially regarding quality,
- many other countries, especially developing countries, look at Germany, consider it an example to be aimed at.

For the time being, Germany is not (yet) a positive example for sustainable development. Its development path is by far too unsustainable at present.

There are some aspects where sustainability is already quite well developed – such as waste management. But there are others, where no sustainability can be imagined so far, e.g. the transport and settlement sectors: with regard to transport – passenger and cargo –

it is simply stated “..will grow”, with regard to settlement, the soil sealing figures tell their own story.

But in principle, there is a methodological, an intellectual/ innovative and a civilian⁶ potential which might allow to solve these basic sustainability problems in an exemplary way.

To stimulate the AGENDA 21 processes (within Germany and elsewhere), models are necessary: solutions for specific problem areas, – however linked to/ with all other relevant problem areas – may be multiplied and adapted to the specific conditions required.

Example:

A basic problem is the transport situation in most districts around the Bavarian capital Munich (too many vehicles, traffic jams, high CO₂ and other polluting emissions, noise, ongoing road constructions with a significant contribution to the soil sealing).

One district model for a really innovative and sustainable transport solution could be an example

- for the other districts around that city (with the need for minor adaptations),
- for surroundings of other big cities in Germany or Europe (with further adaptations),
- for other urban or sub-urban areas in other parts of the world (with more basic adaptations).

There is no doubt that not all transport problems can be solved in an exemplary way on such a small scale. But most of the local problems can, and the higher level problems – such as cargo transport, rail instead of road, through traffic, ... – can be better identified, grasped and their solution can be developed on a better base.

Other examples are

- regional production-trade-consumption cycles (linked to the transport issue and below),
- regional energy concepts (linked especially to the transport issue – via vehicles energy consumption, also to the issues below)
- regional sustainable economic concepts (linked to the each of the above issues and the one below)
- sustainable settlements concepts (linked to the other issues above).

These examples may be considered as “modules” which may be, once developed, adopted and adapted elsewhere. Very typical for the field of AGENDA 21/ sustainability is the evident need for linkages between certain sub-sectors and the related integrated solutions⁷.

Why are such models important for the AGENDA 21 process?

- for the people in the model region (planners, implementors, managers, people) it is encouraging
 - to see an important and substantial project (with clear objectives and a time frame),
 - to be able to get thus external support and exchange of know-how more easily,
 - to have a better chance to get the “project” successful,
 - to take an exemplary role;
- for other people, such a – successful - model is also stimulating, encouraging,
- on higher levels this process – which is not easy and not fast, as any real development – gets more credibility and understanding.

Another very important aspect of the “model approach” for Germany is the following:

As explained above, Germany (and various other European countries plus, to a certain degree, the US) is considered as an example by many other countries; parts of this example are attempted to be copied, but usually the rather unsustainable parts. Common statements made about Germany by people from the “Third World” such aspects, e.g. “Germany’s well developed road system”, “Germany’s Autobahnen/high ways” .. – a field which is in reality among Germany’s most serious unsustainability problems!

A convincing sustainability model in the transport field could open the eyes of still “sustainability-uncritical” players on this planet, and offer better choices for approaches to be copied, better than the ones which Germany can offer at present.

⁶ The development or improvement of “the civil society” in Germany is an important topic these days, see e.g. v. Trott zu Stolz, L.: Bürgerorientierte Kommune – Wege zur Stärkung der Demokratie (Citizen oriented community – approaches to strengthen the democracy), Gütersloh 1999; Glück, A: Mit einer neuen Sozialkultur zur Neuen Bürgergesellschaft (With a new social culture to the new civil society), München 1999.

⁷ There were linkages also before AGENDA 21 but according to conventional approaches, they were not or not sufficiently taken into consideration; especially the strategic planning methods in development cooperation used and advocated network analysis and integrated solutions since a long time (e.g. ZOPP/ Logframe approaches, see GTZ: ZOPP (Objectives Oriented Project Planning), Eschborn 19987; Bernecker, K. and M. Ribi: ZOPP/ OOPP and PRA “Twinship”, in BeraterInnen News 1/97, CH Lindau 1997; Vester, F.: Vernetztes Denken (linked thinking), ...

A third aspect justifying the “model approach”: Every successful model should normally represent a significant milestone on the path towards sustainability.

2. The Present Situation

Within Germany there is a variety of slightly differing AGENDA 21 approaches, varying especially between the federal states. Pathbreaking initiatives on federal state level were made in Bavaria with regard to AGENDA 21 implementation, especially for the community level. Other federal states and “city states” followed. So, the following two sub-chapters (2.1 and 2.2) present especially the Bavarian example.

2.1 How it Got Started – The Local Level

Chapter 28 of the Rio AGENDA 21 (“Local Authorities Initiatives in support of Agenda 21”) requests the following – quite ambitiously, at least with regard to the time frame:

28.2 The following objectives are proposed for this programme area:

- a) By 1996, most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their populations and achieved a consensus on “a local Agenda 21” for the community;
- b) By 1993, the international community should have initiated a consultative process aimed at increasing cooperation between local authorities;
- c) By 1994, representatives of associations of cities and other local authorities should have increased levels of cooperation...
- d) All local authorities in each country should be encouraged to implement and monitor programmes which aim at ensuring that women and youth are represented in decision making, planning and implementation processes...

Generally, the federal government and the governments of the federal states supported the communities in order to get the AGENDA 21 process going on community level. Despite very positive aspects of the start-up of the process on community level, there was also a widespread problem or misunderstanding: The process was initiated on community level in a large majority of cases as a kind of “citizens’ initiative”. Though usually based on a resolution of the community council, their communal politicians and communal administrations very often left the voluntary citizens alone. However, it was emphasised by several relevant institutions and specialists that the local A 21 process should be a tripartite one, compris-

ing the local politicians, the local administration and the citizens.

In Bavaria the ministry concerned (Bavarian State Ministry for Environment and Regional Development - BStMLU) promoted since 1996 a few “A 21 model communities” and “A 21 model districts” and their A 21 processes were professionally accompanied. Beyond that, a special office was established within the Bavarian Office for Environmental Protection (which is under the BStMLU): The task of the office is to support the local AGENDA 21 processes (via a regular publication, internet information, conferences and seminars, promotion programmes with start-up funding..).

A quarter of the about 2000 Bavarian communities has now an ongoing local AGENDA 21 process. Most of them treat similar topics, as energy, transport, nature, settlement, lifestyles. Some have also working groups on economic issues and very few have “One” or “Third World” groups. Some of them are very dynamic. But the majority observed a certain decline after an initial, more or less dynamic starting phase, with sometimes now a certain recovery phase.

The major reasons for the decline are probably the following:

- AGENDA 21 interventions are required where conventional solutions do not work, i.e. AGENDA 21 processes, initiatives are usually challenged with new, difficult, if possible innovative issues; i.e.: normal citizens, normal administrators, normal politicians are often overstrained with that challenge;
- often, this specific aspect of AGENDA 21 is even not recognised; there is a tendency, to do nice things – as another initiative could do, as well, – but not necessarily sustainable things;
- AGENDA 21 needs an objectives oriented planning and management – to be able to reach sustainability in an integrated and systematic way; normal citizens, normal administrators, normal politicians usually do not know such methods;
- an AGENDA 21 process is a development process, enhancing behavioural changes; such changes need enough time, – which is usually not known by normal citizens, normal administrators, normal politicians;
- only a small number of people involve themselves really as “AGENDA 21 actors” (usually not more than 1% of the inhabitants of a community).

Very often, clear objectives, sufficient management structures and management know how are missing in an AGENDA 21 process – leading to frustrations of the people involved.

The reasons for the recovery may be:

- the communal elections which will take place soon; in view of that, many AGENDA 21 groups discover special potentials and advantages, such as their supra-party level;

- the evaluations after three, four, five years show quite some success, – despite the problem that the change, that development takes a lot of time,
- in many groups “a change of generations” takes place, – younger or new people take over from those who started the process – and who are slightly exhausted now; with the new generation, a new dynamic may come up.

There are also very dynamic and interesting local AGENDA 21 processes ongoing.

Example: Community of Herrsching, Bavaria

The community council of Herrsching had passed a resolution with regard to a local AGENDA 21 in 9/1997: The council acknowledged the objectives of the Rio AGENDA 21 and proposed, a local “people’s/ citizens’ AGENDA 21” should constitute itself.

A group of conscious and progressive people had since 1996 started to structure such a process – independent of the council.

During the subsequent general assembly of the community⁸ the people were informed by the politicians about the “AGENDA 21 resolution”, – and vice versa the politicians were informed by the meanwhile elected speaker of the Local AGENDA 21 Herrsching (LA 21 HE) that a structure had been formed right after the resolution had been passed...

During the following months, the LA 21 HE successfully applied – through the community administration – to participate in a promotion programme of start-up of A-21 processes of the Bavarian Ministry of Environment.

The related funding was bound to developing an action programme for sustainable development of the community (“Agenda 21”) including a “Leitbild”⁹ (kind of guiding principles) within a year’s time. Now a group of some 70 people (organised according to different topics in six groups) worked on a completely voluntary/honorary basis¹⁰ during more than a year, applying a “multiple strategy”:

- some projects which were evident contributions to sustainable development were planned and implemented – in order
 - to have some basis for “publicity work” – to reach other people who are not genuinely interested in the topic and still unaware of the need for changing from an unsustainable to a sustainable development path,
 - to get in a practical way some baseline data for planning;
- strategic planning was carried out in a series of workshops and public events.

By 10/1999 the LA 21 HE presented the action programme to the community council. This action programme included

- a series of analyses as a basis for the strategic planning (among others a problem and an objectives analysis in the form of a network analysis, thus facilitating linkages and integrated solutions),
- a “Leitbild” (kind of guiding principles) for a sustainable Herrsching – which was then approved by the community council,
- related action plans with an outline of a policy implementation and impact monitoring (PIIM) system.

End of 2001, the political parties published their programmes for the communal elections (3/2002). Most of these programmes made more or less extensive use of the Leitbild, referred to it and included much more “sustainable” proposals than most of the previous election programmes.

Beginning of 2002, the representatives of the LA 21 Herrsching presented an updated action programme, including the A-21 conform proposals of the political parties made in their programmes for the communal elections (3/2002) – as a basis for common action for the next 6 years.

Beyond strategic planning and action, also many interesting projects were implemented (e.g. a communal solar power station is being implemented, gaps in cycle tracks were bridged, several enterprises had participated in a project for improving environmental management, three had gone up to eco-audit etc.). The most important achievement was, however, a very significant raising of the consciousness of the members of the community council.

⁸ The communities have usually once per year a regular general assembly where all citizens are invited. Out of 6000 adults usually a few hundred attend the assembly. These assemblies are usually used by the mayor to inform the citizens about the essential events of the year with regard to communal development. But the citizens have also the possibility to discuss and to forward applications.

⁹ See e.g.: Bernecker, K.: “AGENDA 21 – How to Develop your Action Programme?” – Preparing for “Rio + 10”, in: BeraterInnen News 2/2001, CH Lindau 2001.

¹⁰ However, with some professionals working as volunteers, but contributing their professional experience (biologists, engineers, physicists, economists, landscape planners, facilitators in strategic planning, management advisors, ...).

2.2 The Situation on Federal State Level

In the German federal states the AGENDA 21 process started from 1996, 1997, 1998 on: From 1996 onwards, some important NGOs¹¹ and subsequently some political parties started initiating a first thinking and discussions about the outcomes of Rio.

In 1997, the communal unions (German Towns Federation, German District Federation, German Town and Community Council), declared, together with the Federal Ministry of Environment, to aim at winning the German communities for the AGENDA 21 process, followed up in the next year, together with the ministers of environment of the federal states¹².

The major issue was to respond to Chapter 28 of the Rio AGENDA 21: "Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21". I.e. it was first of all aimed at initiating the process on local (community) level.

At that time, most governments of the states did not consider themselves concerned by the request of paragraph 1.3 of the Rio AGENDA 21: "... is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments. National strategies, plans, policies and processes are crucial in achieving this... ". First attempts in that sense were started in Bavaria, 1998. However, since recently most of the other states developed such plans on state level, as well.

This first "Bayern-AGENDA 21"¹³ in 1998, as a vanguard among the state "AGENDA 21 papers", comprises very relevant background information about sustainability, the Rio process, the related EU and national policies. Two rather descriptive parts present the environmental sub-sectors and "Sustainable Development as intersectoral task".

Meanwhile, the decision makers' consciousness has very much increased with regard to

- clearly defining objectives,
- quantifying them
- monitoring the achievements.

In February 2001, the Bavarian State Ministry for Regional Development and Environmental Affairs¹⁴ ("BStMLU) organised a conference with the focus on sustainability indicators ("How to make sustainability measurable – ecological indicators for sustainability"). In his speech "Indicators as practical elements of a policy for sustainable development – perspectives for Bavaria", the Minister outlined the present situation of the Bavarian sustainability (AGENDA 21)

policy and related policy monitoring as well as the intentions of the ministry ("perspectives").

- Present situation: There do exist environmental indicator systems. However, they are not yet linked to the related policy and objectives systems; they may be considered as part of classical information systems.
- Perspectives (medium term): The Ministry is about to develop a sustainability policy according to "strategic planning", with clearly defined objectives. This policy aims at defining own, i.e. the Ministry's responsibilities as well as the integration into the overall policy. For that, a policy impact monitoring (PIM) is envisaged, making also use of the existing indicator systems. The purpose of that PIM would be:
 - to verify impacts and effects of the policy, especially in order
 - to improve further planning and information for all levels, and
 - to allow comparisons between Bavaria and the other federal states as well as between Bavaria and the national level.

2.3 The National Level

The national level concentrated initially on the international issues:

- Already for the preparation of the Rio summit, the chancellor had initiated a "German National Committee for Sustainable Development";
- for the "Rio-follow-up process, this committee is still in charge;
- a series of AGENDA 21 conferences was organised by the Federal Ministry of Environment (e.g. "Sustainable Development in the communities and participation of the economic sector". Leipzig, March 1999).

¹¹ Especially those who had participated in Rio, see e.g.: BUND/Misereor: Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland (Germany apt for the future). Basel 1996; Engelhardt; Weinzierl: Der Erdgipfel – Perspektiven nach Rio (The Earth Summit – Perspectives after Rio). Bonn 1993.

Remark: The "Rio Agenda 21 comprises a specific chapter (Ch 27) on NGOs and their role with regard to the AGENDA 21 process.

¹² Common Declaration ... Regarding Local Agenda 21, 7./8. Mai 1998, Heidelberg 1998.

¹³ A second, updated AGENDA 21 is being prepared at present.

¹⁴ Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Landesentwicklung und Umweltfragen – BStMLU.

Related to that, some most urgent topics within the broad field of sustainability were and still are treated on national level – with certain linkages to the lower levels, as e.g. the “National Climate Protection Programme” of the German Government – which is an answer to Chapter 9 of the Rio AGENDA 21 – “Protection of the Atmosphere”.

In view of the Rio+10 Summit which will take place 9/2002 in Johannesburg, the German Government (like some others) makes special efforts with regard to implementing AGENDA 21 and achieving progress towards sustainability¹⁵. At the beginning of 2001, it was decided to establish eventually a German sustainability strategy, a kind of “national AGENDA 21”. For that purpose, two temporary institutions have been created by the German Government: the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSO) and the “Green Cabinet” (GC).

For the explicit elaboration of a “National Sustainability Strategy” (NSS), an approach with a participatory component is attempted. The following time schedule is foreseen for the elaboration:

October 2001 until mid November 2001	Internet Dialogue with the citizens about objectives/ Leitbild
December 2001	First draft of the strategy
January 2002	Public discussion of the draft
April 2002	Presentation of the strategy
September 2002	World summit "Sustainable Development" in Johannesburg

A major weakness of the GC approach is about the “One-World” aspect which may be understood under 3. and especially 4. above: It is interpreted in a very paternalistic way, concentrating on poverty and hunger issues – but not on our real responsibility of providing serious sustainability solutions, examples or models which could be adapted and adopted elsewhere.. – as we did so far, but just within an unsustainable field, even enhancing unsustainability elsewhere!

First available results are the following focal areas defined by the “Green Cabinet”:

Focal Areas of the German NSS	Chapter (Linkages to the Rio AGENDA 21)	Remarks, references
1. Equity between generations		Basic idea of the AGENDA 21 (since “Brundtland Commission”*)
2. Quality of life	1 (Preamble): “...improved living standards, better protected and managed eco-systems and a safer, more prosperous future...”. (normally I and N)	The idea of the Rio AGENDA 21 is: improved living standards for all!
3. Supporting/ assisting one another (“Social cohesion”)	1 (Preamble): “...integration of environment + development concerns will lead to fulfilment of basic needs, improved living standards for all... No nation can achieve that on its own; but together we can – in a global partnership for sustainable development.”	Basic idea of the AGENDA 21 especially on global level – between the countries . The German approach sounds so far “German-centric”.
4. International responsibility	all Chapters, especially: 1; 2: “International cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries...”; 3: Combating poverty (I); 4: Changing consumption patterns (N)...	The major topics proposed here by the Green Cabinet are so far: environmental protection, poverty eradication, protection against international terrorism.

Explanations for column 2: I: Especially international level, N: especially national level.

* will be translated «Nachhaltige Entwicklung ist eine Entwicklung, die den Bedürfnissen der heutigen Generation entspricht, ohne die Möglichkeiten künftiger Generationen zu gefährden, ihre eigenen Bedürfnissen zu befriedigen.» Weltkommission für Umwelt und Entwicklung («Brundtland-Kommission»), 1987.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Bernecker, Kerstin: “AGENDA 21 – How to Develop your Action Programm?” – Preparing for Rio+10. in: BeraterInnen News 2/2001, Lindau CH 2001.

The National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSO) has proposed a “Leitbild (Guiding Principles) for our future” – as a basis for the strategy:

“Sustainable development aims at a future in a world

- which becomes larger and more colourful,
- with an environment which is sane and sound, in which the natural diversity is conserved,
- with more democracy and prosperity,
- in which the common cultural heritage is cultivated.

Not living at the expense of future generations or people in other parts of the world, – this is a basic principle of sustainable development. A balance between our needs today and the perspectives of life of future generations shall guarantee a high quality of life, the conservation of nature and environment, the social and cultural cohesion and taking international responsibility in a globalising world”.

However, both, the GC and the NCSO request objectives, indicators and quantification without making them evident or available so far. In addition to above, the legal framework, the incentives (subsidies, promotion programmes) and disincentives systems as crucial part of the policy framework on national level, needs mentioning (in the Rio AGENDA 21, Chapter 39 is dedicated to that topic).

In the “spirit of Rio”, even the German constitution was amended in 1994: Article 20a was added, saying “Natural resources of life: The state is protecting the natural resources of life, also with regard to its responsibility for the future generations, within the constitutional order through the legislation and according to law and order through the execution and the jurisdiction.” Apart from that and in addition to that, an environmental legislation was developed and gradually improved since the 1970s. Further development and improvement is being expected through the interaction between NSS and legislation. Incentives (e.g.: the law with regard to feeding power from renewable energies into the general power grid) and disincentives (“eco-taxes”) have been developed and improved.

3. The Strengths and the Weaknesses of the German A-21-Process

Strengths

The major strength of the process is presumably that it became a real movement with a maximum of “grass roots” involvement. Due to the international and na-

tional, very serious background, implementation of A 21 topics is relatively easy nowadays. In addition, the community politicians have available and make partly use of a high potential of qualified experts, on honorary basis, the AGENDA 21 citizens.

Weaknesses

In many, though not all, AGENDA 21 processes on the various levels – including the national one – a serious weakness can be observed: Most people involved in such a process forget about the German responsibility with regard to the “rest of the world” and the “reverse effects” from there, if there are not very significant improvements made “there”: massive migration movements and immigrations, wars and other man made catastrophes with ample direct and indirect negative impacts on Europe and Germany have to be expected.

Another important observation (confirmed by research) is the following: The majority of people have difficulties to really join this process. AGENDA 21 issues and solutions start where conventional practices and solutions fail. This is logical, as the AGENDA 21 was elaborated when the conventional approach, based on indefinite availability of resources and absorption capacities of all kinds of pollution, could not work any more. I.e.: in order to manage our present and future satisfactorily and sustainably, we are confronted with a permanent intellectual challenge.

It turned out so far, that not more than about one percent of the population can be reached and involved along this “intellectual line”. And there is little hope for a significant change in the near future, as sustainability and behaviour compatible with sustainability requirements is not anchored in our genes, - as there has been no need for it so far in our evolution. I.e.: In such an initial phase, sustainability behaviour is achieved mainly along the intellectual line – until it would become – hopefully – part of human culture.

The potential of the administrative structure of the country and related linkages from one level to the other is insufficiently or not used so far.

In most AGENDA 21 processes, including the one on national level, intersectoral linkages and integrated approaches are highly underdeveloped. The available strategic planning methods are hardly anywhere used.

4. Recommendations

The major recommendations of this article are

- to make all efforts to get sustainability and sustainability behaviour as soon as possible into our culture, and therefore
 - introduce sustainability and sustainability behaviour consequently – from A to Z – into the education systems;
 - children have to learn sustainability – including the “one world aspect” -and get it into their sub-consciousness, same as they learn to read and to write – or even better!
 - in any other education and training sustainability, sustainability behaviour have to become a basic aspect;
 - with high priority: teachers (on all levels), administrators (of public and private administrations), politicians, managers need urgently upgrading in that field;
- the relevance of our role and responsibility with regard to the rest of the world, especially the „developing world issue“, our related responsibility and the risk of reverse effects if we do not take that responsibility has to be made clear on all levels – and to be included into the educational efforts;
- further monitoring and related support of the AGENDA 21 processes on all levels by politicians etc. is required;
- more professional and more strategic methods on all levels, but at least on the higher ones (national, federal states..) have to be applied;
- linkages between national objectives (and monitoring), federal state objectives etc. down to the communities an vice versa, have to be established in iterative processes.

The recommendations for the German AGENDA 21 process are partly relevant for other countries, may be adapted and adopted.