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## Local Agenda 21 in Germany: An inter- and intranational comparison

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**DISCUSSION PAPER**

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Local Agenda 21 in Germany  
An Inter- and Intranational Comparison

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## Abstract

More than ten years after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which marked the institutionalization of Agenda 21 and the beginning of Local Agenda 21 processes all over the world, it is time to summarize and evaluate the situation with respect to Local Agenda 21 in Germany. Even in Germany, which can be considered as a latecomer regarding the implementation of Local Agenda 21, the diffusion of this policy innovation seems to have reached its end. This paper starts from an *international*, comparative perspective and Germany's position as a latecomer regarding Local Agenda 21 initiation; however, it focuses primarily on the *intranational*, comparative standpoint. We analyze the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 in four German states (*Länder*) (Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, and Thuringia). The comparisons between Germany and other countries at international level and between the *Länder* at national level demonstrate that the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 depends above all on three factors: (1) local authorities' capacities for action; (2) financial and political support from national and regional governmental organizations; and (3) (trans)national and regional agenda transfer institutions which facilitate the exchange of knowledge and know-how between local authorities, and thus accelerate the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 processes. Local authorities, which have greater capacities for action, which are better supported by the particular German state (*Land*) where they are located, and which show a higher degree of integration into transfer networks are more active and innovative in the area of Local Agenda 21.

## Zusammenfassung

Mehr als zehn Jahre nach dem Umweltgipfel in Rio 1992, der die Institutionalisierung der Agenda 21 und den Beginn von Lokalen Agenda 21-Prozessen überall in der Welt kennzeichnete, ist es an der Zeit, die Situation der Lokalen Agenda 21 in Deutschland zu bilanzieren und zu evaluieren. Sogar in Deutschland, das als Nachzügler im Bereich der Implementation der Lokalen Agenda 21 betrachtet werden kann, scheint die Diffusion dieser Politikinnovation an ihrem Ende angeht zu sein. Als Ausgangspunkt dieses Artikels dient die international vergleichende Perspektive und Deutschlands Position als Nachzügler im Hinblick auf die Initiierung der Lokalen Agenda 21. Die Analyse konzentriert sich allerdings vor allem auf die *intranational* vergleichende Perspektive. Wir analysieren die Diffusion der Lokalen Agenda 21 in vier ausgewählten deutschen Ländern (Berlin, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Bayern und Thüringen). Die Vergleiche zwischen Deutschland und anderen Ländern auf der internationalen Ebene und zwischen den deutschen Ländern auf der nationalen Ebene zeigen, dass die Diffusion der Lokalen Agenda 21 vor allem von drei Faktoren abhängt: (1) den Handlungskapazitäten der Städte und Gemeinden, (2) der finanziellen und politischen Unterstützung durch nationale und regionale Regierungsorganisationen sowie (3) den (trans)nationalen und regionalen Institutionen des Agenda-Transfers, die den Erfahrungsaustausch zwischen den Kommunen verbessern und die Diffusion von Lokalen Agenda 21-Prozessen beschleunigen. Städte und Gemeinden, die über mehr Handlungskapazitäten verfügen, von dem Bundesland, in dem sie liegen, besser unterstützt werden, und einen höheren Grad der Integration in Transfernetzwerke aufweisen, sind im Bereich der Lokalen Agenda 21 aktiver und innovativer.

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## 1. Introduction

Descriptions of Local Agenda 21 in Germany range from the enthusiastic declaration, “Makers of the Future”,<sup>1</sup> to the not-very-hopeful comparison of the process with “waiting for Father Christmas” (Oels, 2002). More than ten years after the Rio Earth Summit, whose closing paper “Agenda 21” marked the birth of Local Agenda 21 processes, it is time to summarize and evaluate the German situation with respect to Local Agenda 21. Even in Germany, which can be considered as a latecomer regarding the implementation of Local Agenda 21, the diffusion of this policy innovation appears to have reached its end, although in 2004 about 2,500 German cities, towns, and counties began Local Agenda 21 processes. This paper starts from an *international*, comparative perspective and Germany’s position as a latecomer in initiating Local Agenda 21; the article focuses, however, primarily on *intranational* comparative factors.

Although Germany lagged behind other countries in the 1990s, it has since become a pioneer, at least regarding the absolute number of initiated Local Agenda 21 processes. However, significant differences exist within Germany, i.e., between the German states (*Länder*). This paper aims at an explanation of Germany’s international position and differences within the country. It is based on the results of the international comparison of the implementation of Local Agenda 21, and focuses on a general comparison of all German *Länder* as well as on selected case studies. In section 2 we start with the analysis of Germany’s international position, comparing it with other countries like Sweden and the United Kingdom where Local Agenda 21 processes started earlier than in Germany. In section 3 differences within Germany are described and explained. To this end, we present four case studies on the diffusion of Local Agenda 21: Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, and Thuringia. Finally, in section 4, we draw some conclusions regarding factors which support or restrict the diffusion of Local Agenda 21.

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1 “*Die Zukunftsmacher — Lokale Agenda 21 Hessen*” (“Makers of the Future — Local Agenda 21 in Hesse”) was the enthusiastic title of a Local Agenda 21 event organized by the Ministry of Environment in Hesse to mark the staging of the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002.

## 2. Local Agenda 21 in Germany from an *International Comparative Perspective*

In the European context, Germany is one of a group of countries that were relatively late in implementing Local Agenda 21. This conclusion can be drawn, for example, from the study, “Sustainable Communities in Europe” (see Lafferty and Coenen 2001; Lafferty 2001), which examined Local Agenda 21 implementation in eleven European countries. The study classifies Germany as one of the “late-comers”<sup>2</sup> because by 1995/1996 only very few German local authorities had initiated Local Agenda 21 processes. Regarding the take-off of the diffusion of Local Agenda 21, Germany clearly lagged behind the pioneer countries for several years. In the meantime, however, Germany has advanced to the position of world leader,<sup>3</sup> at least regarding the absolute number of Local Agenda 21 processes initiated, while the progress of the pioneer countries is visibly declining.

Sweden and the UK emerged as the most prominent of the pioneers (cf. Fiedler and Hennerkes 1996: 390). The dynamic development in the UK was triggered by the general legitimacy crisis in local democracy, which can be traced back to the drastic restrictions on local authority autonomy introduced by Margaret Thatcher. Thus, the British local authorities used Local Agenda 21 for democratic renewal and as an opportunity to re-assert and expand their severely restricted competencies (Zimmermann 1997: 70; Jonas et al. 2004: 152). Sweden also emerged very positively from the comparison because all of its local authorities had initiated a Local Agenda 21 process by early 1996 (Jörby and Lindström 2000: 103; Eckerberg 2001). However, in both the UK and Sweden, the number of local authorities in which Local Agenda 21 processes were carried out but have since stopped or were substituted by other policy approaches (e.g., “Community Strategies” in the UK) is steadily increasing (cf. Jonas et al. 2004: 164).

An explanation of the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 in different national and regional contexts can be based on general diffusion approaches. Diffusion patterns

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2 Based on the time of implementation and the number of Agenda processes carried out, the studied countries can be classified in four groups: (1) the pioneers — Sweden, UK, and the Netherlands; (2) the adapters — Denmark, Finland, and Norway; (3) the late-comers — Austria and Germany; and (4) the laggards — Spain, Italy, Ireland, and France (Eckerberg and Lafferty 1998: 245 f.; cf. Eckerberg, Coenen, and Lafferty 1999: 243; cf. also Lafferty and Coenen 2001: 272 f.).

3 Around 6,000 local authorities worldwide have initiated a Local Agenda 21 process (ICLEI 2001: 4 f.; ICLEI 2002: 3, 9).



can be explained by the characteristics of policy innovation, transfer mechanisms, and the potential innovators' capacities for action (cf. Kern, Jörgens, and Jänicke 2001). The analysis of Local Agenda 21 diffusion constitutes a special case because this policy innovation was introduced by the Rio Conference. Thus, all of the potential adopters of the innovation knew the characteristics from the outset. Our analysis must, therefore, concentrate on the capacities of local authorities to adopt this innovation and on the transfer mechanisms. Regarding the capacities, we distinguish here between the direct capacities and the induced capacities of a city. This relates to different national and regional contexts and the characteristics of intergovernmental relations, because a city's capacities depend on the financial and political support of the country and/or region in which it is located (see Lafferty and Coenen 2001).

In sum, then, three factors play a key role with respect to the variations in the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 in different national and regional contexts: (1) the cities' and towns' capacities for action (direct capacities); (2) intergovernmental relations, especially the financial and political support from national and regional governmental organizations (induced capacities); and (3) the existence of agenda transfer institutions to promote the exchange of experience and support the diffusion of best practice.

First, the direct capacities for action of local authorities are determined by the available resources. Rich cities tend to initiate Local Agenda 21 processes earlier than poor villages. Economic capacity for action, i.e., the availability of resources, is repeatedly cited as a central factor in the implementation of Local Agenda 21. This concerns primarily the financial resources of a city or town for this purpose. Political-institutional capacities also have an important role to play in this context. It is more likely that Local Agenda 21 resolutions will be passed and implemented by larger local authorities than smaller ones, as the latter do not have the necessary political provisions for action. From the standpoint of international comparison, it should be noted here that Sweden has less than 300 cities and towns and the UK less than 500 councils. In contrast to this there are more than 12,000 cities and towns in Germany.<sup>4</sup> This difference explains, why the proportion of corresponding resolutions on Local Agenda 21 in Germany is still only about 20%. However, almost all of the larger German cities are currently working on Local Agenda 21

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4 On the average, local authorities in Germany cover an area of only about 6,000 inhabitants; these calculations are based on data for 2002. Since then the number of local authorities has decreased steadily due to territorial reforms in all the new eastern states (former GDR) excluding Saxony; see table A-1 in the annex.

projects: 99% of all cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants and 94% of all cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants have started a Local Agenda 21 process. Therefore, we assume that states with a higher ratio of small cities and a relatively low number of inhabitants per local authority also show a lower percentage of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions.

Second, the financial and political support provided by national and regional governmental organizations (induced capacities) has proven particularly advantageous, for example, with respect to the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 in Sweden or the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the discrepancies between countries also result from the varying significance of national (subsidy) programs promoting Local Agenda 21. One prominent example is the UK “Local Agenda 21 Campaign” launched in 1993. While Local Agenda 21 was supported by national governments in other countries, this was not the case in Germany (Zimmermann 1997: 34). Local authority autonomy and intergovernmental relationships seem to play an important role here, too. Decision-making powers in Germany’s federalist structure are distributed over several levels of administration, which can constitute a considerable obstacle to the speedy diffusion of Local Agenda 21 processes (cf. also Lafferty and Coenen 2001).

Third, the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 is also determined by national and transnational transfer institutions. The international comparison shows that the transfer institutions range in nature from strictly state-run organizations to exclusively private consultancies. Governmental organizations as well as local authority associations in Sweden and the UK<sup>6</sup> are not only far less fragmented than in Germany, they also initiated the implementation of Local Agenda 21 relatively fast after Local Agenda 21 was decided upon in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (cf. Lafferty and Coenen 2001: 272). In contrast, the national government and the national associations of local authorities in Germany<sup>7</sup> were not as interested in Local Agenda 21 as

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5 Local Agenda 21 processes in the Netherlands received financial support from their national government (cf. Serwe 1997; Coenen 2001; Lafferty and Coenen 2001: 276 f.; Norland et al. 2003: 84 ff.). For information on national subsidy programs in Sweden see Eckerberg (2001: 18), Norland et al. (2003: 16 ff.), and Rowe and Fudge (2003: 136).

6 Particularly worthy of mention in this context are the activities of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA) and the British Local Government Management Board (LGMB) both of which began activities as early as 1993 (Eckerberg, 2001; Young 1998: 183 ff.).

7 These are the German Congress of Cities (*Deutscher Städtetag*), the German Association of Cities and Towns (*Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund*), and the German Congress of Counties (*Deutscher Landkreistag*).

their Swedish or British counterparts.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it took Germany much longer to initiate Local Agenda 21 processes. These were supported in the German *Länder* mainly by specialized Agenda transfer institutions which did not exist before 1996.

The “National Service Agency for Local Agenda 21” (*Bundesweite Servicestelle Lokale Agenda 21*) was finally established in 2002. This agency now acts as a platform for dialogue and as a service provider for all those involved in the Agenda process and for the media, multipliers, and other interested parties. Furthermore, the agency served as an intermediary between the national government, the *Länder*, and local-authority umbrella organizations, on the one hand, and the local authorities, on the other, in preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.<sup>9</sup> Another service organization, “Local Authorities in the One World” (*Kommunen in der Einen Welt*), was established in 2001 to support the “One World” work of local authorities. Additionally, the national sustainability strategy, adopted by the German government in spring 2002 (Bundesregierung 2002), provided Germany with its first national sustainability concept which offers a common point of reference for the local authorities. The “Council for Sustainable Development” (*Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung*), established by the German government in 2001, also cooperates with and supports Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

### **3. Local Agenda 21 in Germany from an *Intranational* Comparative Perspective**

Direct capacities for action, the support by governmental organizations, and agenda transfer institutions are important not only in the international context. We assume that these three factors are also decisive for the explanation of the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 in different German regions and states. The comparison of the *Länder* is of special interest for several reasons. First, the high number of Local Agenda 21 processes in Germany and the fact that the process has obviously reached its end is optimal for carrying out analysis and comparison of Local

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8 In addition to the national agenda transfer institutions, the transnational city networks also support the initiation and implementation of Local Agenda 21. The International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign (Aalborg Charta) are two of the most prominent city networks in this respect. However, membership in the transnational city networks does not explain the differences within Germany (cf. Kern 2001, 2002).

9 Funding of this federal agenda transfer institution is assured only up to the end of 2004; there is no *institutional* funding, but only *program* funding. For 2005, no financial decisions have been taken as yet by the German federal government.

Agenda 21 diffusion patterns in the German federal states. Second, at least some German states (such as North Rhine-Westphalia or Bavaria) are as big as or even bigger than many member countries of the European Union. Third, the general framework conditions in the German states are the same for all of them; this fact facilitates the comparison of their specific Agenda 21 initiatives and the results considerably. Fourth, agenda transfer agencies at state level and state programs for the support of Local Agenda 21 initiatives were established long before an agenda transfer agency at federal level began its own initiatives. Therefore, we assume that the differences between the states are crucial for the diffusion patterns of Local Agenda 21 in Germany.

### 3.1 Differences Between the *Länder*

By July 2004, a total of almost 2,500 local authorities (including about 170 counties) in Germany had initiated Local Agenda 21 processes. This is almost 20% percent of all German local authorities, and more than half of its counties.<sup>10</sup> Figure 1 shows that there was no significant increase in the number of Local Agenda 21 resolutions until 1997, i.e., five years after the Rio Earth Summit.

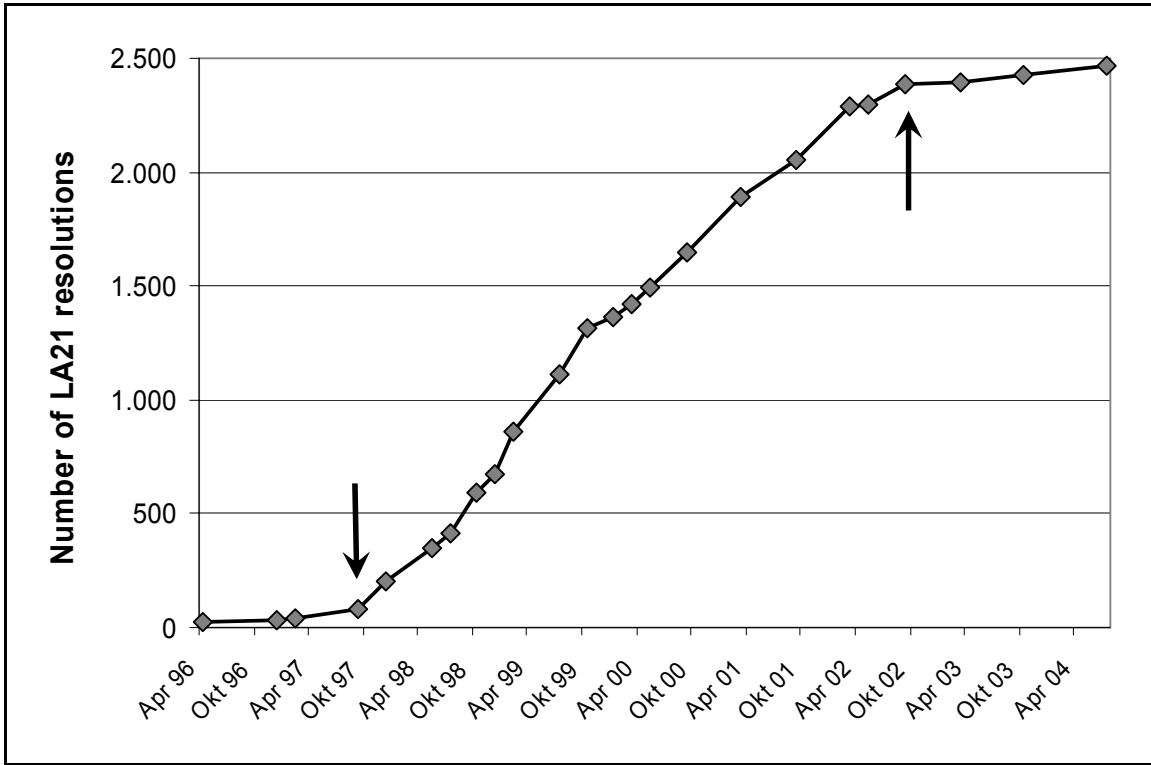
Most cities and towns became active between fall 1997 and fall 2002. Within these five years the number of local authorities which had started a Local Agenda 21 process jumped from less than 100 to almost 2,400 cases. Since then only a few new resolutions have been decided upon each year, and it now appears that the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 will come to a standstill very soon.<sup>11</sup>

What is striking here is that the initiation and implementation of Local Agenda 21 varies from one state to the next. The German states can be divided into four distinct groups on the basis of their Local Agenda 21 diffusion patterns (see figure 2 below; compare figures A-1, A-2, and A-3 in the annex).

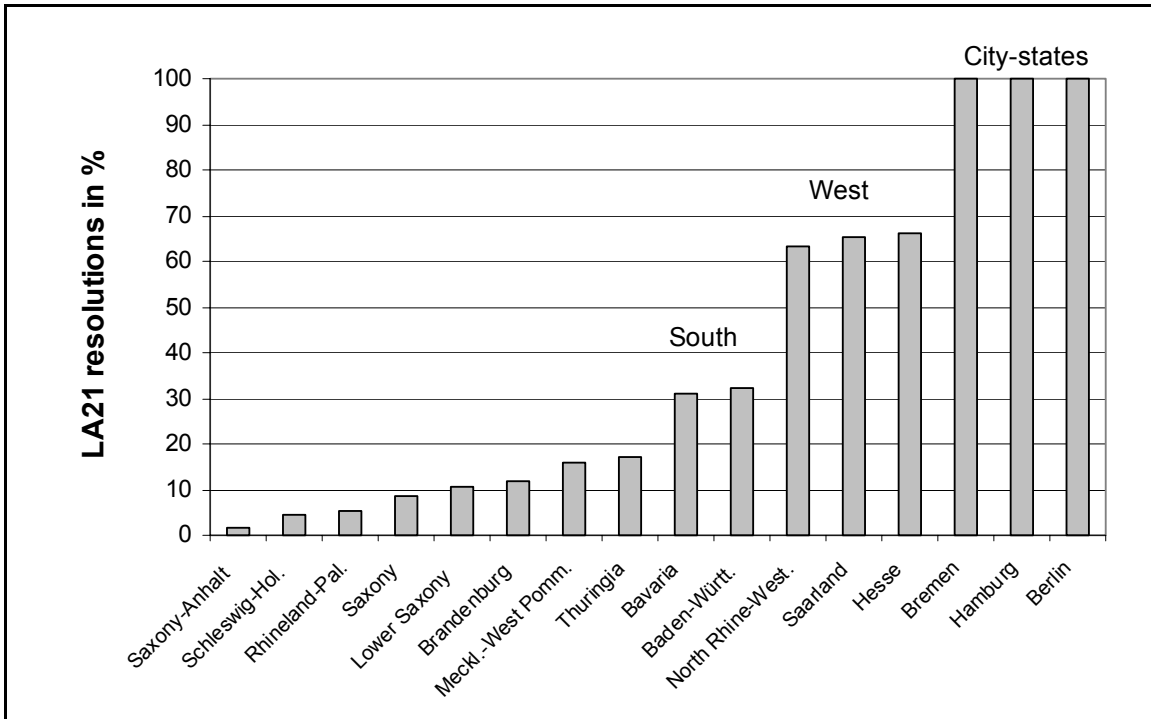
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10 Data from *Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutscher Gemeinden* (2002) and *Agenda-Transfer — Agentur für Nachhaltigkeit* (Agenda Transfer — Agency for Sustainability); cf. <<http://www.agenda-service.de/admin/download/Beschluesse01072004.pdf>>, accessed on 01 July 2004; for details see table A-1 in the annex.

11 The slight increase within the last years regarding the percentage of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions is mainly an effect of territorial reforms in the new *Länder* (the former GDR) which reduced the number of local authorities in eastern Germany.



**FIGURE 1**  
 Development of Local Agenda 21 resolutions in Germany, including counties, from 1996 to 2004 (status as of 01 July 2004).



**FIGURE 2**  
 Local Agenda 21 resolutions by state as a percentage of all local authorities, excluding counties (status as of 01 July 2004).

- The *city-states* (Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen) are the pioneers when it comes to Local Agenda 21 initiation and implementation in Germany. Resolutions to establish a Local Agenda 21 were passed in all three city-states. About 5.8 million Germans altogether live in these three cities. Local Agenda 21 processes started earlier here than in the territorial states (they began, for example, in Berlin in 1994).<sup>12</sup>
- The *western states* North Rhine-Westphalia, Hesse, and Saarland are the pioneers in the group of territorial states. In these states, which, with more than 25 million inhabitants altogether, account for about 30% of the entire German population, the percentage of cities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions lies between 60% and 70%.
- The *southern states* (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg), where about 23 million people or almost 30% of the population live, can be called (early) adopters. In this region around 30% of local authorities have passed a Local Agenda 21 resolution. In absolute terms, however, the South accounts for most of the resolutions (more than 700 in Bavaria alone), because a large number of local authorities (more than 3,000 cities, towns, and counties) are located in this region (see table A-1 in the annex).
- The *remaining states* can be classified as latecomers and laggards. This group comprises all the eastern states, the southwestern state of Rhineland-Palatinate, and the northern states of Lower-Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. All of the new, i.e., former East German, states occupy the lower middle ground. Saxony-Anhalt, where less than 2% of all local authorities have initiated a Local Agenda 21 process, is in the very last position.

Local authorities' economic and political capacities for action constitute one of the main factors behind the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 processes. The availability of financial resources is crucial for the initiation of a Local Agenda 21 process (Technische Universität München 2003a), which means that richer cities are more likely to start a Local Agenda 21 process. Political-institutional capacity for action varies significantly among the German regions. The vast differences in the number and sizes of local authorities in the individual states are the most important factor in this context. For example, municipalities (about 400) in North Rhine-Westphalia, one of the pioneer *Länder*, averaged about 45,600 inhabitants in 2002. Bavaria, by

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12 The first Local Agenda 21 process in Germany began in October 1994 in Berlin-Köpenick, one of the city's eastern boroughs.

contrast, has almost six times more municipalities (about 2,300) but which average only about 6,000 inhabitants. The even smaller number of municipalities in Rhineland-Palatinate (averaging about 1,800 inhabitants) could also explain the low number of Agenda resolutions passed there.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it can be assumed that states with fewer, but heavily populated, municipalities are more likely to become front-runners in the diffusion of Local Agenda 21. In such states the percentage of cities with resolutions is highest. In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, the majority of local authorities, which formulated an Agenda resolution, have Agenda Officers or, depending on their size, have even established Agenda Offices. These Agenda Offices have played a key role in the organization of Local Agenda 21 processes (cf. Gansen, Anton, and Hoffmann 2001: 7). In Bavaria, Agenda Officers are found primarily in municipalities larger than 10,000 inhabitants; Agenda Offices having more than one employee exist only in bigger cities and counties (Technische Universität München 2003a).

The implementation of Local Agenda 21 is most advanced in the states that were able to provide the necessary subsidies — e.g., North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse (see also Bleja 1998: 117). An additional factor that has a positive effect on Local Agenda 21 diffusion is the early adoption of an Agenda 21, an environmental policy plan, or a sustainability strategy by the state. Although all of the German states declared their intention to promote sustainability processes, hitherto only six states (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony, Saarland, and Schleswig-Holstein) actually have a strategic plan for sustainable development. It is interesting to note that all of these states are located in western Germany. In a study of sustainable development in the German *Länder*, Jörgensen (2002: 13) concludes that, especially in the new states, bottlenecks in administrative capacity at state level have been an obstacle to the development of sustainability programs.

Whereas in Sweden and the UK the national government and the general associations of local authorities became active as transfer institutions at an early stage, in Germany special transfer institutions were established within the state ministries (e.g., in the Bavarian State Ministry for Regional Development and Environment Issues or the Hessian State Ministry for Environment, Energy,

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13 It is remarkable that the two West German states at the bottom of the league, Schleswig-Holstein and Rhineland-Palatinate, are — together with Bavaria — among the front-runners regarding the percentage of counties with Local Agenda 21 resolutions. It seems that in states with lower average numbers of inhabitants per municipality, the counties become crucial for the implementation of Local Agenda 21; see Technische Universität München (2003: 67, 95 ff.); compare Table A-1 in the annex.

Youth, Family, and Health) or as completely new organizations such as *CAF/Agenda-Transfer*<sup>14</sup> in North Rhine-Westphalia. In Germany, transfer institutions created at state level are more important in terms of Agenda transfer than the national ministries or national associations of local authorities, which tend to dominate the scene in other countries. In Thuringia, for example, the number of Local Agenda 21 processes increased significantly within a short period following the launch of an Agenda transfer institution designed to provide targeted support to local authorities. The continuity and reliability of such support are of crucial importance here (Zahrnt 2002). Differences between German *Länder* can be explained by the introduction of such transfer institutions. Thus Thuringia, for example, 17% of whose local authorities have Local Agenda 21 resolutions, is the pioneer among the eastern states, boasting four newly created regional offices. By contrast, Saxony-Anhalt, which provides comparatively little political and financial support for Local Agenda 21 processes, is at the bottom of the league with respect to the percentage of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions.

### **3.2 Local Agenda 21 in Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, and Thuringia**

We have argued that the German states can be clustered into four groups along the percentage line of Local Agenda 21 resolutions (see figure 2 above; compare figures A-1, A-2, and A-3 in the annex). The following sections present four case studies representing each of the four groups: The pioneers with a high percentage of Local Agenda 21 resolutions will be represented by (1) Berlin, a city-state, and (2) North Rhine-Westphalia as a territorial state in the western part of the country; the early adopters will be represented by (3) Bavaria, a state in the south of Germany; the late-comers and laggards (which have, however, increased their activities significantly within recent years) will be represented by (4) Thuringia. The case studies are based on the following criteria: (1) Local Agenda 21 activities and diffusion patterns in the individual states; (2) general, underlying conditions such as the overall economic situation and state's administrative structure; these factors determine the capacities of local authorities; (3) the financial and political support for Local Agenda 21 initiatives from the state; and (4) the Agenda transfer institutions at state level.

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14 *“CAF/Agenda-Transfer”* is now known as *Agenda-Transfer — Agentur für Nachhaltigkeit* (Agenda Transfer — Agency for Sustainability).



## **Berlin**

In the national context, Berlin is among the most active cities when it comes to Local Agenda 21 initiation and implementation. Local Agenda 21 resolutions were passed in all 23 of Berlin's former boroughs (*Bezirke*)<sup>15</sup> between October 1994 and June 1998 (Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin 2000: 307 ff.). Model boroughs like Berlin-Köpenick had the first local authorities that actively promoted Local Agenda 21 in Germany and have served as exemplars for other cities (cf. UBA 1998). An initial draft for an Agenda 21 for the whole City of Berlin was introduced in November 2002; an intermediary report on the draft was published in February 2003 by the Berlin Senate, and in March 2004 a revised version of the Agenda draft was presented.<sup>16</sup> The next step will involve the actual adoption of the Berlin Agenda 21 by the state government. Therefore, it will be discussed in the Berlin Parliament (*Abgeordnetenhaus*) in fall 2004.

Berlin's Local Agenda 21 process began in 1994 as a "bottom-up" process. In this respect, Berlin differs from other city-states, e.g., Hamburg, where the first initiative came from the top political level. While the top-down approach in Hamburg was advantageous at first, in the long run it was the reason why the process in Hamburg was neither supported by a broader basis of the population nor sanctioned with the participation of different societal groups. Berlin's bottom-up approach was based on its strong tradition of environmental and developmental initiatives. Its long-standing practice of taking the political initiative appeared to really push the Agenda 21 process at the outset. Many Agenda initiatives did turn out to be pre-existing activities, however, which had merely shifted under the new umbrella of "Local Agenda 21".

Local Agenda 21 activities in the boroughs decreased when it became obvious that resolutions and activities on the policy-making side did not follow quickly enough at the level of city administration. The Berlin Senate did not pass a resolution to develop a Local Agenda 21 for the entire city until 1999 — five years after the initiation of the first bottom-up activities. This led to a second phase in the Berlin Local Agenda 21 process. The activities moved from bottom-up initiatives in the local boroughs to activities at city level. This new phase was characterized by

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15 In January 2001 an administrative reform reduced the original number boroughs in Berlin from 23 to the present 12. In the following, however, we continue to speak of 23 boroughs, because these original divisions were the relevant units for the Local Agenda 21 process thus far.

16 A short version of the draft is available from <[http://www.agenda21berlin.de/bilder/2004\\_kurzfassung\\_la21.pdf](http://www.agenda21berlin.de/bilder/2004_kurzfassung_la21.pdf)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

the involvement of professional actors, and its activities were mainly independent of the local activities in the boroughs (cf. Schophaus 2001).

Concerning the overall political and economic preconditions, it should be kept in mind that Berlin is not only Germany's capital, but also its largest city with a population of about 3.4 million. Today Berlin's economic situation is disastrous. The city had received extensive subsidies from the national government up to German reunification in 1989, after which time subsidies of that nature were discontinued. The subsequent process of economic restructuring is not yet complete and continues to pose significant problems for the city. Berlin has a very low growth rate. In 2003 growth was only 0.2%, which was below the national average.<sup>17</sup> Its unemployment rate in 2003 was 20.2%,<sup>18</sup> which is comparable with rates in other East German states, but far higher than the national average (11.7% in 2003).<sup>19</sup>

As a city-state, Berlin's administration is divided into two levels: the Senate (*Senat*), which is the administrative authority for the State of Berlin, and the borough administrations (*Bezirksämter*), which govern the individual boroughs. The *Bezirksämter* are not independent; the Senate has the power to intervene in local decisions. This distribution of power leads to conflicts between the city and borough authorities.

Local Agenda 21 activities in Berlin were supported financially not only by the Berlin Senate but also indirectly by the federal government. The so-called Berlin "coordinator model" (*Koordinatorinnenmodell*) is the feature that characterizes the Berlin Local Agenda 21 process vis-à-vis economic capacities. Forty-eight coordinators, hired via financial support of the secondary labor market,<sup>20</sup> were assigned the task of coordinating the activities in the boroughs. The coordinator model was funded with about € 600,000 per year. For each of the (former) 23 boroughs two coordinators were integrated into the local administrations; two further coordinators were placed at a city wide Agenda office established by the Senate's planning

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17 See <[http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis\\_VGR/tab01.asp#](http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis_VGR/tab01.asp#)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

18 See <[http://www.statistikportal.de/Statistik-Portal/de\\_zs02\\_bl.asp](http://www.statistikportal.de/Statistik-Portal/de_zs02_bl.asp)> (accessed on 26 June 2004); unemployment rates for the German *Länder* are EU standardized and seasonally adjusted.

19 See <[http://www.statistikportal.de/Statistik-Portal/de\\_zs02\\_bund.asp](http://www.statistikportal.de/Statistik-Portal/de_zs02_bund.asp)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

20 This means that the coordinators were indirectly financed by the federal government. This group of employees had been previously unemployed and were therefore financed by subsidies from the federal unemployment agency.

department. The job of these coordinators was to support Local Agenda 21 at local level. The positions were limited to three years (1997 to 2000). A study evaluating the Berlin coordinator model (see DIFU/FFU 1999) confirmed that this support increased the activities and dynamics of the Agenda process.

However, when the budget for the coordinators was cut after the initial three-year period, most of the activities broke down as quickly as they had started. The Berlin Senate ascribed responsibility for the activities to the borough administrations, whereas the borough administrations clearly felt that Local Agenda 21 was the responsibility of the Senate. No alternative solutions were found because neither the City of Berlin nor its boroughs could provide the necessary funds. This “buck-passing” between the authorities raised public doubt about the genuineness of the authorities’ support for the Local Agenda 21 process. The central Agenda Office in the Senate’s planning department was maintained, however, with three-and-a-half positions to coordinate the Berlin-wide activities

The Agenda transfer institutions in Berlin are not comparable with those in the other German states. However, the Berlin process has also benefited from the establishment of bodies that are similar to such transfer institutions. In addition to the central Agenda Office, a “Public Working Group” (*Öffentlicher Arbeitskreis*) responsible for the exchange of experiences between different boroughs was created in 1995. Two further coordinating offices were also set up. One was the Agenda-Forum, which has been in operation since 2000 and is the main body for the Agenda process in Berlin. Another position was created in 1996 within an NGO, the Green League (*Grüne Liga*), which serves as a liaison, providing a contact address for the public and linking the different activities and actors by organizing Agenda events. Both positions are now funded by the Senate’s planning department at € 100,000 per year (from 2000 to 2003 they had received € 150,000 per year). The exchange of best practice is achieved through the distribution of a regular newsletter.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, we can say that the Local Agenda 21 process in Berlin has been comparatively advanced. All of the city’s boroughs passed Local Agenda 21 resolutions before June 1998. Various factors assisted this rapid development of Local Agenda 21 in Berlin. The bottom-up process helped to get the process going at a comparatively early stage. The availability of economic resources — in particular, the

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21 Other important institutions in the context of the development of Local Agenda 21 in Berlin included two enquiry commissions (*Enquetekommissionen*) and a project agency which supported projects fostering sustainable development in Berlin and Brandenburg.

coordinator model — further accelerated the process. Development did regress, however, when the resources for coordination were cut; there was very little further activity in many districts after the resolutions were passed. What is interesting to note from the example of Berlin is that Agenda transfer institutions can be established in different corpora, for instance, within government bodies or NGOs.

### **North Rhine-Westphalia**

North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is one of the states which initiated a Local Agenda 21 process at an early stage. Compared to the rest of Germany, many Local Agenda 21 resolutions have already been passed in this state, in more than 60% of its cities and towns, and more than 60% of its counties (see table A-1 in the annex). North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse, which has a similar state structure, lead in percentage of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions.

The overall conditions in North Rhine-Westphalia certainly had a positive impact on the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in this state. In economic terms, North Rhine-Westphalia accounts for 22% of the country's gross domestic product.<sup>22</sup> This is due to the high density of the population and the state's long-standing history of heavy industry. North Rhine-Westphalia used to be the center for coal and steel in Germany; its transformation to high technology industry and services is still under way. The unemployment rate at 10.1% (2003) is below the national average.<sup>23</sup>

With a population of about 18 million inhabitants, North Rhine-Westphalia is the most densely populated German state. It has 373 county-affiliated smaller towns and villages (*kreisangehörige Gemeinden*), 23 non-county municipalities (*kreisfreie Städte*), 31 counties (*Landkreise*), and five regional districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) (Statistisches Jahrbuch deutscher Gemeinden 2002: 126).<sup>24</sup> This means that North Rhine-Westphalia is characterized by the combination of a relatively small number of local authorities with a high number of inhabitants per municipality (see table

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22 See <[http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis\\_VGR/tab01.asp#](http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis_VGR/tab01.asp#)> (accessed on 13 July 2004).

23 See <[http://www.statistikportal.de/Statistik-Portal/de\\_zs02\\_nrw.asp](http://www.statistikportal.de/Statistik-Portal/de_zs02_nrw.asp)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

24 *Regierungsbezirke* = administrative division below the level of state administration; *Regierungsbezirke* do not exist in all German states; *Landkreise* = administrative division roughly equivalent to a county; *Kreisfreie Städte* = towns that are administrative divisions in their own right, not part of a *Landkreis* (county); *Kreisangehörige Gemeinden* = administrative divisions that are partly governed and controlled by the *Landkreise* (counties); for details see table A-1 in the annex.

A-1 in the annex). This combination represents an advantage for the organization of Local Agenda 21 processes and it is probably one reason for the high percentage of resolutions passed in North Rhine-Westphalia.

North Rhine-Westphalia supported the Local Agenda 21 process comparatively well. From 1996 until 2003, municipalities received € 0.21 per inhabitants, primarily for North-South cooperation. In 2004, this procedure was changed so that local authorities must now apply for specific projects in the area of North-South cooperation. North Rhine-Westphalia provides € 1.8 million for this program. Since 2000, the state has funded another program with € 3 million annually for projects in the area of environmental education and Local Agenda 21 activities. Such favorable conditions have enabled many municipalities to establish Local Agenda 21 Offices and run their own projects (see Ganson, Anton, and Hoffmann 2001). The North Rhine-Westphalian Foundation for Environment and Development (Nordrhein-Westfälische Stiftung für Umwelt und Entwicklung),<sup>25</sup> which supports projects for sustainable development and North-South cooperation with lottery funds, is another relevant resource in this context.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of political support for Agenda 21, North Rhine-Westphalia is better off than many other German *Länder*. In 2000, the state government appointed a governing committee at undersecretarial level, whose task was to develop a broad strategy for sustainable development for the whole state of North Rhine-Westphalia. This committee was advised by the “Council for the Future” (*Zukunftsrat*), which consists of 28 prominent individuals from politics, economics, trade unions, churches, and other organizations. After the NRW Agenda 21 had become part of the coalition agreement in June 2000, a broad Agenda consultation process was launched in 2002 and continued throughout 2003. A final decision on the NRW Agenda 21 is to be expected very soon.

The early, professional establishment of an Agenda transfer institution was also highly advantageous to the development of Local Agenda 21 in North Rhine-Westphalia. “Agenda-Transfer”, an independent agency, was established in 1996 to support the following objectives:

- the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the local authorities,
- the increased flow of information and exchange of experience between initiatives,

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25 See <<http://www.nrw-stiftung.de/>> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

26 However, local authorities can not apply for these funds, which aim at non-state actors.

- the dissemination of best practice,
- the provision of information and advice for interested actors, and
- the creation of networks and infrastructure.

“Agenda-Transfer” and the “State Working Group Agenda 21 for North Rhine-Westphalia” (*Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Agenda 21 NRW*)<sup>27</sup> receive financial support from the state for the purpose of linking the different local and regional activities.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, North Rhine-Westphalia is one of the pioneers concerning Local Agenda 21 diffusion in Germany. The process there got off to an early start. The combination of a relatively small number of municipalities with a relatively high number of inhabitants per municipality was favorable to the organization of Local Agenda 21 activities. The process was financially supported by the state, had reasonable infrastructure at its disposal, and was backed by state policy decisions early on. The first state-level Agenda transfer institution was established in North Rhine-Westphalia.

### **Bavaria**

By 2004, about 700 cities, towns, and counties in Bavaria passed resolutions to initiate Local Agenda 21.<sup>29</sup> It is remarkable that not only 30% of the cities and towns, but also about 85% of the counties have passed a Local Agenda 21 resolution. The local authorities active in Local Agenda 21 represent 60% of the population, because many larger towns are involved (Bayerisches Landesamt für Umweltschutz 3/2003: 3). By comparison, only 16 local authorities were active in this area in 1995 (cf. figure A-2 in the annex).

In July 2004, a comprehensive evaluation study on Local Agenda 21 in Bavaria was published. This survey reveals an enormous range of Local Agenda 21 activities in Bavaria and shows how Local Agenda 21 affected local politics and policies. However, Local Agenda 21 processes have begun to stagnate in many municipali-

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27 See <<http://lag21.de>> (accessed on 03 August 2004).

28 In 2002, “Agenda-Transfer” was extended to the whole of Germany and its national branch was named the “National Service Agency for Local Agenda 21” (*Bundesweite Servicestelle Lokale Agenda 21*); see section 2 above.

29 See <<http://www.agenda-service.de/admin/download/Beschluesse01072004.pdf>> (accessed on 01 July 2004).

ties,<sup>30</sup> so that the long-term effects may prove difficult to ascertain (Technische Universität München 2003: 169, 173).<sup>31</sup>

About 15% of all Germans live in the Free State of Bavaria, which accounts for almost 20% of Germany's entire territory.<sup>32</sup> Bavaria is a relatively rich state with an extensive economic capacity. In 2003 it had the second lowest unemployment rate (7.9%) after Baden-Württemberg.<sup>33</sup> Economic growth in Bavaria (1.1%) was above the national average in 2003;<sup>34</sup> with its share of more than 17% of the gross domestic product, Bavaria ranks second in the country economically after North Rhine-Westphalia.<sup>35</sup> In the 1960s Bavaria transformed itself from a primarily agricultural region into one dominated by industry, technology, and services (automobiles, chemicals, electricity, for example).<sup>36</sup> Agriculture remained nonetheless "rooted in the souls of the people" (März 2002: 46 f.).

Bavaria's administrative structure is subdivided into 2,031 county-affiliated local authorities (*kreisangehörige Gemeinden*), 25 non-county municipalities (*kreisfreie Städte*), 71 counties (*Landkreise*), and seven regional districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) (März 2002: 60 f.; Statistisches Jahrbuch deutscher Gemeinden 2002: 126). The high number of relatively small local authorities can be considered as the most crucial obstacle for the diffusion of Local Agenda 21. Almost 90% of the municipalities average less than 10,000 inhabitants.

The Bavarian government supported its local authorities financially through its "General Environmental Fund" (*Allgemeiner Umweltfonds*) and through resources provided from EU structural funds. The Bavarian subsidy program for Local Agenda 21 has two possibilities for financing activities. First, overall costs of model projects for implementing Local Agenda 21 action programs or managing Local Agenda 21 processes, public relations, and special educational measures, can

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30 About 25% of the responding local authorities stated that the Local Agenda 21 process had been stopped or was finished (Technische Universität München 2003a: 27).

31 See <<http://www.stmugv.bayern.de/de/agenda/agenda21/komma21/eval/index.htm>> (accessed on 13 July 2004).

32 See <<http://www.destatis.de/indicators/d/vgr910ad.htm>> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

33 See <[http://www.statistikportal.de/de\\_zs02\\_by.asp](http://www.statistikportal.de/de_zs02_by.asp)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

34 See <[http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis\\_VGR/tab01.asp](http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis_VGR/tab01.asp)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

35 See <[http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis\\_VGR/tab01.asp#](http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis_VGR/tab01.asp#)> (accessed on 13 July 2004).

36 This transformation was encouraged by the development of the Bavarian infrastructure, the immigration of German refugees and expellees, and the transfer of companies (e.g., Siemens) from former German territories in Central and Eastern Europe (März 2002: 45).

be subsidized up to € 52,000.<sup>37</sup> Second, external organizational studies of ongoing Agenda processes, which identify and highlight any weaknesses and thus contribute to improving these processes, can also be financed, although to a lesser extent.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, Bavaria supported Local Agenda 21 by holding an annual state-wide Agenda competition with corresponding awards.<sup>39</sup>

The support of Local Agenda 21 activities by the Bavarian government has had positive effects on Local Agenda 21 processes. In 1997, the state passed the so-called “Bavarian Agenda” (Bayern-Agenda),<sup>40</sup> which was followed by the “Action for a Sustainable Bavaria” (Aktion nachhaltiges Bayern).<sup>41</sup>

Bavaria’s Agenda transfer institution, “KommA21 Bayern”,<sup>42</sup> (Agenda 21 headquarters for Bavarian municipalities) was also established in 1997. It is embedded in the “Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection” (*Bayrisches Landesamt für Umweltschutz*). The advantage of this arrangement lies in the fact that KommA21 Bayern is relatively well-accepted as a part of the state government by local authority administrations and mayors of Bavarian towns and cities. The main associations of local authorities, which enjoy considerable political influence, were involved in establishment of KommA21 Bayern and are also members of its advisory board. Regional and local authority politics are closely intertwined in Bavaria, including an overlap of personnel (März 2003: 46).

In sum, then, Bavaria, like North Rhine-Westphalia, is among the richest states in Germany. Unlike NRW, however, it has relatively small municipalities, and this may explain why it has a noticeably lower percentage of Local Agenda 21 resolutions. Financial and political support of Local Agenda 21 initiatives in Bavaria was intensive from the outset. The Bavarian government established Komm21 Bayern, its Agenda transfer institution, in 1997, as part of its State Office for Environmental Protection — a relatively early development compared to the activities of other German *Länder*.

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37 Funding is limited to a maximum of 60% of the overall costs; see <[http://www.bayern.de/lfu/komma21/foerderung/index\\_foerderung.php](http://www.bayern.de/lfu/komma21/foerderung/index_foerderung.php)> (accessed on 13 July 2004).

38 For further details, see <<http://www.bayern.de/lfu/komma21/forderung>> (accessed on 03 August 2004).

39 The previous agenda competitions took place in 2000 and in 2002.

40 See <<http://www.stmugv.bayern.de/de/agenda/agenda21/bayern.htm>> (accessed on 03 August 2004).

41 See <<http://www.stmugv.bayern.de/de/agenda/wssd/index.htm>> (accessed on 03 August 2004).

42 See <<http://www.agenda-transfer.net/agenda-service/admin/download/bayern.pdf>> (accessed on 03 August 2004).



## **Thuringia**

By 2004, 182 out of about 1,000 cities and towns in Thuringia had passed a Local Agenda 21 resolution<sup>43</sup> — this corresponds to a rate of about 17%.<sup>44</sup> Thus, compared to all German states, Thuringia comes out at the top of the lower half, sharing this position jointly with Mecklenburg-Western Pommerania. The enormous rise in the number of local authorities in Thuringia, which have passed Agenda resolutions in the recent past is worthy of note. By 2000, for example, only 103 local authorities and regions were actively working on a municipal or regional Agenda 21 project in Thuringia.<sup>45</sup>

The status of Local Agenda 21 in Thuringia, a pioneer among the eastern states, can be related to overall prevailing conditions. The region has major economic problems, but did record 1.8% growth in 2003, which is twice the national average.<sup>46</sup> A few major industrial companies are located in Thuringia (e.g., BMW and Jenoptik); otherwise economic activity is concentrated mainly in small and medium-sized businesses. Growth in the service sector has been unable to compensate for the loss of jobs in industry.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the region has a high level of emigration (in particular among young, educated persons) and prognoses do not indicate that this trend is likely to reverse in the foreseeable future (Peter 2002: 287 f.; cf. table A-1 in the annex).

The Free State of Thuringia has a comparatively small gross domestic product: € 41.8 billion. This corresponds to approximately 2% of the national gross domestic product.<sup>48</sup> As of June 2003, the unemployment rate in Thuringia was 17.7%; this is above the national average but corresponds to the situation in the rest of eastern Germany.<sup>49</sup> Despite its size and unemployment problems, Thuringia is

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43 See <<http://www.agenda-service.de/admin/download/Beschluesse01072004.pdf>> (accessed on 01 July 2004).

44 If the ongoing administrative reform, which aims at a reduction of the number of local authorities, is taken into account, this rate is even higher (Agenda-Transfer — Agentur für Nachhaltigkeit 2004); for details see table A-1 in the annex.

45 See <<http://www.thueringen.de/de/tmlnu/themen/agenda>> (accessed on 26 June 2004); cf. figure 4.

46 See <[http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis\\_VGR/tab01.asp#](http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis_VGR/tab01.asp#)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

47 Tourism is the main focus of activity in some parts of Thuringia. Considerable efforts are also being made to modernize the region's universities and scientific facilities.

48 Cf. <[http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis\\_VGR/tab01.asp#](http://www.statistik-bw.de/Arbeitskreis_VGR/tab01.asp#)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

49 Cf. <[http://www.statistikportal.de/de\\_zs02\\_th.asp](http://www.statistikportal.de/de_zs02_th.asp)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

nevertheless one of the best performing of the new German *Länder*, and recent developments indicate that hopes for improvement are justified.

Thuringia's administrative structure is similar to that in other German states. The state has about 1,000 county-affiliated local authorities (*kreisangehörige Gemeinden*), 6 non-county municipalities (*kreisfreie Städte*), and 17 counties (*Landkreise*) (Statistisches Jahrbuch deutscher Gemeinden 2002: 126; Peter 2003: 294).<sup>50</sup> Because Thuringia is a relatively small state with only about 2.4 million inhabitants, it does not have any regional districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) (Peter 2003: 286). These structural factors are less favorable for the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 initiatives, compared, for instance, to the situation for North Rhine-Westphalia or Bavaria.

Since 2000, Thuringia (aided by the European Union)<sup>51</sup> has provided about € 500.000 annually for the support of Local Agenda 21 initiatives.<sup>52</sup> This situation will remain constant for projects to be approved up to 2006 and funded until 2008. Regarding Local Agenda 21 activities, two different modes of funding can be distinguished:<sup>53</sup> (1) funding for the start-up of a Local Agenda 21 process (for a period of up to three years)<sup>54</sup> and (2) funding for the implementation of small projects initiated by ongoing Local Agenda 21 processes.

In terms of political support, Local Agenda 21 has enjoyed comparatively high priority in Thuringia, although, unlike in Bavaria, it has not been buttressed by a state sustainability strategy. The joint objective of the state government and top municipal organizations was defined in the 2001 "Report on the Development of the Environment in Thuringia" as follows: "... to encourage cities, towns, and counties to design their daily administrative tasks in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. The implementation of Agenda 21 should become a permanent component of local authority policy."<sup>55</sup> In 2001, Thuringia sponsored a

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50 Cf. <<http://www.thueringen.de/de/regional/map/index.html>> (accessed on 26 June 2004); cf. table-A-1.

51 The relevant program is funded by EU structural funds.

52 Based on personal information of the State Ministry for Agriculture, Nature Conservation, and Environment Thuringia (Landesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Naturschutz und Umwelt Thüringen).

53 Only 50 to 75% of the overall costs of such projects can be financed through this program.

54 This means that Local Agenda activities in 7 to 8 local authorities can be funded annually.

55 See the *Bericht zur Entwicklung der Umwelt in Thüringen 2001* <[http://www.tlug-jena.de/content/frs/umwpolit2001/22\\_00101\\_01\\_polber03.html](http://www.tlug-jena.de/content/frs/umwpolit2001/22_00101_01_polber03.html)> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

competition for the implementation of Agenda 21, in collaboration with local small and medium-sized businesses.

*GET Agenda 21*, a state-wide Agenda transfer institution, was established jointly in 1999 by the Thuringian Association of Urban and Local Authorities (*Gemeinde- und Städtebund Thüringen*) and the Thuringian Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation, and the Environment (*Thüringer Ministerium für Landwirtschaft, Naturschutz und Umwelt*) (TMLNU). In this same year four regional Agenda transfer Offices were also set up.<sup>56</sup> The purpose of *GET Agenda 21* and the regional transfer offices was to promote an exchange of information and experience among relevant actors.<sup>57</sup> *GET Agenda 21* was forced to end its work in late 2002 and, today, consultancy tasks are assumed by the regional Agenda transfer offices and the TMLNU.<sup>58</sup> What this means for the future of Local Agenda 21 processes in Thuringia remains to be seen.<sup>59</sup> The long-term consequences of this institutional reform are unclear.

In conclusion, Thuringia is still battling the serious economic problems characteristic for eastern Germany. The municipalities in Thuringia are small — even smaller than those in Bavaria. Local Agenda 21 was financially supported by the state, although Thuringia's subsidy program was started later than those in the pioneering states of the western half of Germany. Thuringia has no state sustainability strategy, nor is one planned. The state-wide Agenda transfer institution, *GET Agenda 21*, was established in 1999, but dissolved only three years later. Four regional Agenda transfer offices still operate and support Thuringia's Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

### **Comparison of the four states**

The four states vary considerably in size, socio-economic development, and political structure. Thus, no general causal explanations for the development of Local Agenda 21 can be given easily. However, by observing the diffusion patterns

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56 Formally, these four regional agenda transfer offices are NGOs and not part of the state government; however, they are funded by the state government.

57 See <[http://www.thueringen.de/de/tmlnu/themen/agenda/lokale\\_agenda\\_21/content.html](http://www.thueringen.de/de/tmlnu/themen/agenda/lokale_agenda_21/content.html)> (accessed on 03 August 2004).

58 Cf. <<http://www.gstb-thueringen.de/GETAgenda21/Veranst/2002196.htm>> (accessed on 26 June 2004).

59 The joint sponsors issued the following statement on the closure of the joint transfer institution: "The Thuringian Association of Urban and Local Authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation, and the Environment shall also work for the continued implementation of Local Agenda 21 on a partnership basis in the Free State of Thuringia."

in each state, looking at state financial and political support, and surveying transfer institutions, clear differences become visible. Together these features suggest that capacities and Agenda transfer institutions are highly relevant for Local Agenda 21 processes.

Figures 3 and 4 show the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 resolutions in Berlin, Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Thuringia.<sup>60</sup> Figure 3 gives the absolute numbers of Local Agenda 21 processes, and figure 4 compares the diffusion patterns in the four states, based on their status in 2004 and relative development from the outset of the process. It is evident that the diffusion process started in Berlin in 1994, followed by North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria in the 1996-1997 period, and Thuringia about two years later (compare figures A-1, A-2, and A-3 in the annex). Table 1 below summarizes all relevant differences between the four states.

While North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria are among the richest German states, Thuringia's economic problems are clearly evident. In North Rhine-Westphalia population density is higher and the average municipality bigger than in Bavaria or Thuringia. Berlin is a special case because it is not only the biggest city in Germany, but it is also bankrupt. Despite its lack of financial resources, Berlin-Köpenick became the first local authority to start a Local Agenda 21 process. Thus, overall preconditions are certainly decisive for the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 and account for differences among the *Länder* vis-à-vis percentage of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions.

Local authorities in all four states had access to state funding. North Rhine-Westphalian municipalities received regular support per capita per annum, and this state also established additional funding programs for Local Agenda 21 activities, which made longer-term planning possible. Bavaria funded inter alia model projects, process management, and (external) organizational studies. Thuringia provided funds for Local Agenda 21 from 2000 onward. Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Bavaria all offered political support for Local Agenda 21 initiatives. The state-wide committee in North Rhine-Westphalia and the "*Bayern-Agenda*" (resolution for the whole state of Bavaria) were especially helpful in

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<sup>60</sup> In July 2004, the percentage of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions was 100% in Berlin, 63.4% in North Rhine Westphalia, 31% in Bavaria, and 17.3% in Thuringia; for details see table A-1 in the annex.

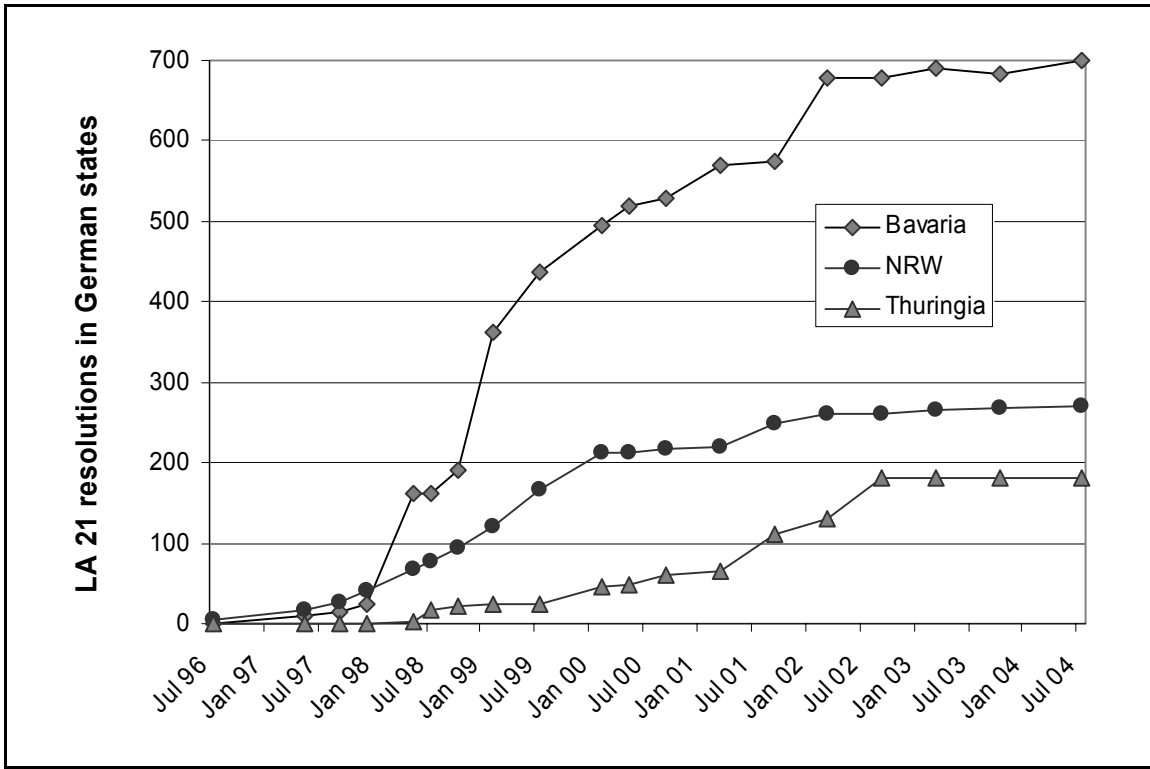


FIGURE 3

Local Agenda 21 resolutions in selected German states (absolute figures).

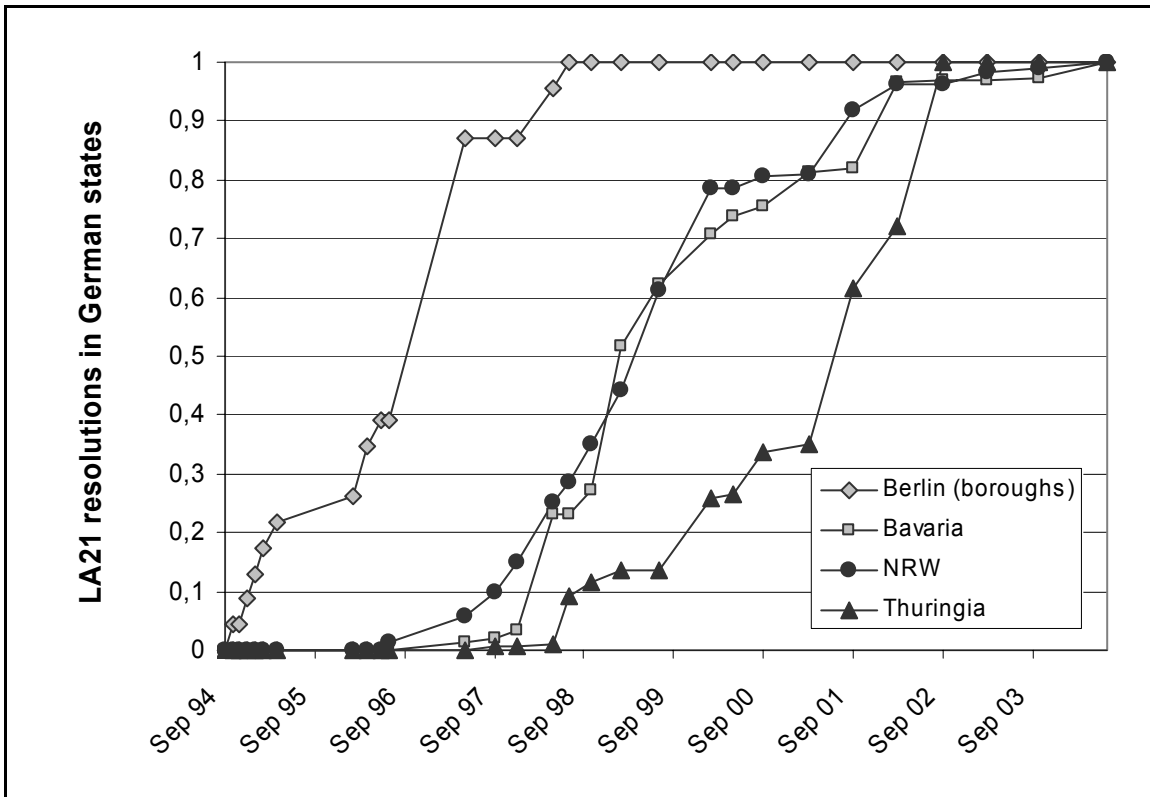


FIGURE 4

Local Agenda 21 resolutions in selected German states;  
relative figures based on the status as of July 2004.

**TABLE 1**  
Systematic comparison of selected German states

1. Characteristics of Local Agenda 21 and Diffusion Patterns				
	Berlin	North Rhine-Westphalia	Bavaria	Thuringia
Local Agenda 21 resolutions	Resolution for the city of Berlin plus 23 resolutions for all boroughs (100%)	251 63.4% of all local authorities	637 31.0% of all local authorities	174 17.1% of all local authorities
LA21 resolutions in municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants	–	22 8,8% of all resolutions	162 25,4% of all resolutions	N.N.
Counties with an Agenda 21 resolution	–	20 64,5% of all counties	60 84,5% of all counties	8 47,1% of all counties
Typology	Pioneer (city-state)	Pioneer (territorial state)	(Early) Adopter	Late-comer

2. General Characteristics of the States				
	Berlin	North Rhine-Westphalia	Bavaria	Thuringia
State type	City-state	Territorial state (West)	Territorial state (South)	Territorial State (East, former GDR)
Inhabitants (2002)	3,388,434	18,052,074	12,329,714	2,411,387
Inhabitants per municipality (national average 2002: 6,145)	3,388,434	45,586	5,997	2,371
Municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants (2001)	-	14.4%	89.3%	96.8%
Unemployment rate (2003) (national average: 11.7%)	20.2%	10.1%	7.9%	17.7%
Administrative structure in 2002	Senate and 12 boroughs (In January 2001, the number of boroughs was reduced from 23 to 12 by an administrative reform.)	373 county-affiliated local authorities ( <i>kreisangehörige Gemeinden</i> ) 23 non-county municipalities ( <i>kreisfreie Städte</i> ) 31 counties ( <i>Landkreise</i> ) 5 regional districts ( <i>Regierungsbezirke</i> )	2,031 county-affiliated local authorities ( <i>kreisangehörige Gemeinden</i> ) 25 non-county municipalities ( <i>kreisfreie Städte</i> ) 71 counties ( <i>Landkreise</i> ) 7 regional districts ( <i>Regierungsbezirke</i> )	1,011 county-affiliated local authorities ( <i>kreisangehörige Gemeinden</i> ) 6 non-county municipalities ( <i>kreisfreie Städte</i> ) 17 counties ( <i>Landkreise</i> ) No regional districts ( <i>Regierungsbezirke</i> )

3. Local Agenda 21 Support from the States				
	Berlin	North Rhine-Westphalia	Bavaria	Thuringia
<b>Financial support from the state</b>	48 coordinators were employed for three years (1997 to 2000); since 2000 only 3.5 coordinators have been employed in the Senate's planning department; two further offices, Agenda Forum and an exchange office within the <i>Grüne Liga</i> (Green League), were financed at € 150,000 per annum from 2000 to the end of 2003, but since 2004, at only € 100,000 per annum	Local authorities received € 0.21 per inhabitant per year from the state from 1996 until 2003 for North-South cooperation; New funding scheme since 2004 (€ 1.8 million); Since 2000, funding program for environmental education and LA21 activities (€ 3 million annually).	Local authorities receive financial support (for model projects, process management, organizational studies etc.); Agenda competitions and award procedures financially supported by the state since 2000.	Since 2000, about € 500,000 are provided annually by the state for LA21 activities. Local authorities can apply for (1) start-up funding or (2) implementation funding.
<b>Political support from the state</b>	Agenda 21 for the whole city-state of Berlin will be decided upon in fall 2004.	Governing committee at undersecretary level, advised by the Counsel for the Future ( <i>Zukunftsrat</i> ); Sustainability strategy for NRW still in the planning phase.	Land passed a <i>Bayern Agenda</i> in 1997.	Sustainability strategy for Thuringia not planned.

4. Agenda Transfer Institutions at State Level				
	Berlin	North Rhine-Westphalia	Bavaria	Thuringia
<b>Characteristics of state Agenda transfer institutions</b>	<i>Agenda Office</i> in the Senate planning department since 1997; <i>Grüne Liga</i> , an NGO, organizes the exchange of best practice between the boroughs.	<i>Agenda-Transfer</i> since 1996 (first Agenda transfer agency in Germany) (expanded to the national level in 2002).	<i>Komma 21 Bayern</i> established 1997 within the Bavarian Government.	Transfer institution <i>GET Agenda 21</i> , for the whole state, started its work in 1999, but ended it in 2002; Since then, only four regional Agenda transfer offices have existed in the form of NGOs.

Data source: Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutscher Gemeinden 2001, 2002; Agenda-transfer — Agentur für Nachhaltigkeit.

connecting municipal-level activities with the discussion about sustainable development at the state level. Thuringia had fewer political capacities from the outset. This is probably one reason why Local Agenda 21 processes started later in Thuringia and did not develop with the same dynamics as they did in other states. Whereas most western German states already have or are in the process of establishing environmental plans or sustainability strategies, which support the implementation of Local Agenda 21 at local level, this is not the case for any of the eastern German states.

Although the four states — Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, and Thuringia — differ considerably from each one another, the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 resolutions, on the other hand, seems to be strongly connected to the presence of Agenda transfer institutions. Such institutions were established in all four cases, albeit at different times. A very interesting case is that of Berlin. Besides a governmental Agenda office (which the other states have as well), Berlin established its own Local Agenda 21 office within a local environmental NGO which also functions as an Agenda transfer agency. This has the advantage of being more embedded in the civil society. North Rhine-Westphalia had the earliest Agenda transfer institution, created in 1996. This institution, which was very active right from the outset, was later transformed into a national service office in 2002. In Bavaria, “*KommA21 Bayern*”, a governmental agency, served as an Agenda transfer institution since 1997. Thuringia set up a similar institution first in 1999, but when it did, it also established four additional regional offices at the same time. Once these institutions had been set up, Local Agenda 21 resolutions came at an accelerated rate. “*GET Agenda 21*”, the state-wide Agenda transfer institution, was dissolved after only three years of existence.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The comparisons between Germany and other countries at international level and between the German *Länder* at national level (especially vis-à-vis the huge discrepancies between the groups of states in the western, southern, and eastern parts of Germany, respectively), demonstrate that the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 depends, above all, on three factors: local capacities for action, state support, and state Agenda transfer institutions. Our study shows that local authorities, which have greater capacities for action, which are strongly supported by the particular state in which they are located, and which are better integrated into state transfer networks are more active and innovative in the area of Local Agenda 21.



The regional dimension makes a real difference for the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 in federal states. In Germany, financial and political support from the states and the establishment of Agenda transfer institutions at state level have improved the exchange of experiences between cities and towns, and have accelerated the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 considerably. These results are interesting for several reasons. They show in general that the capacities of the potential adopters in multi-level systems are not independent from other governmental actors. In this particular case it becomes clear that within nation-states the discussion on “governance by diffusion” must take into account whether and how national or regional policies influence the capacities of the potential adopters at local level.

In conclusion, therefore, the establishment of transfer institutions is essential for the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 processes, but the success of transfer networks and agencies depend on their combination with state programs which support Local Agenda 21 processes financially and politically. From this point of view, local sustainability strategies might be successful if the respective transfer institutions existed and operated effectively, and if such strategies were financially and politically supported by the states.

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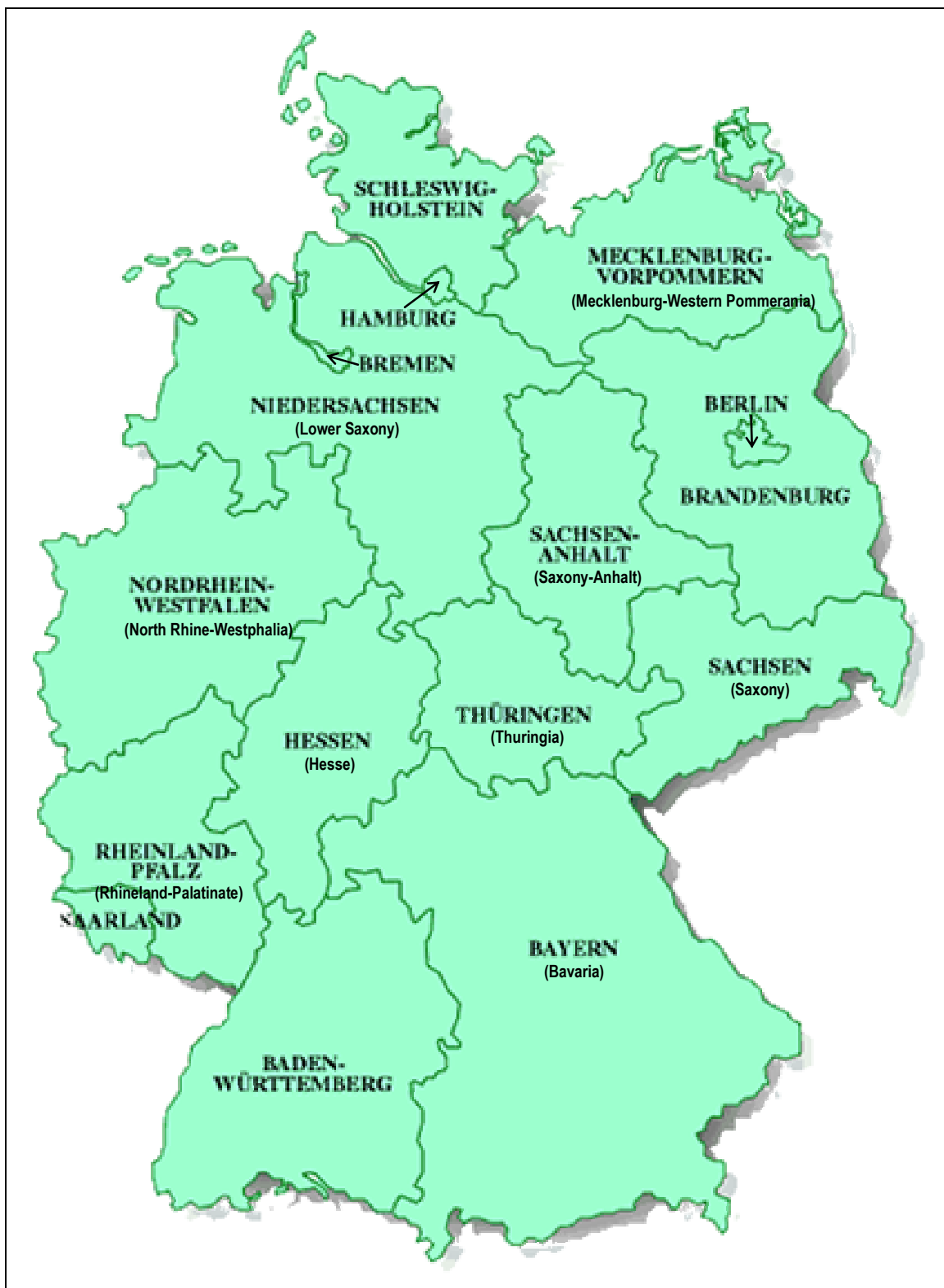
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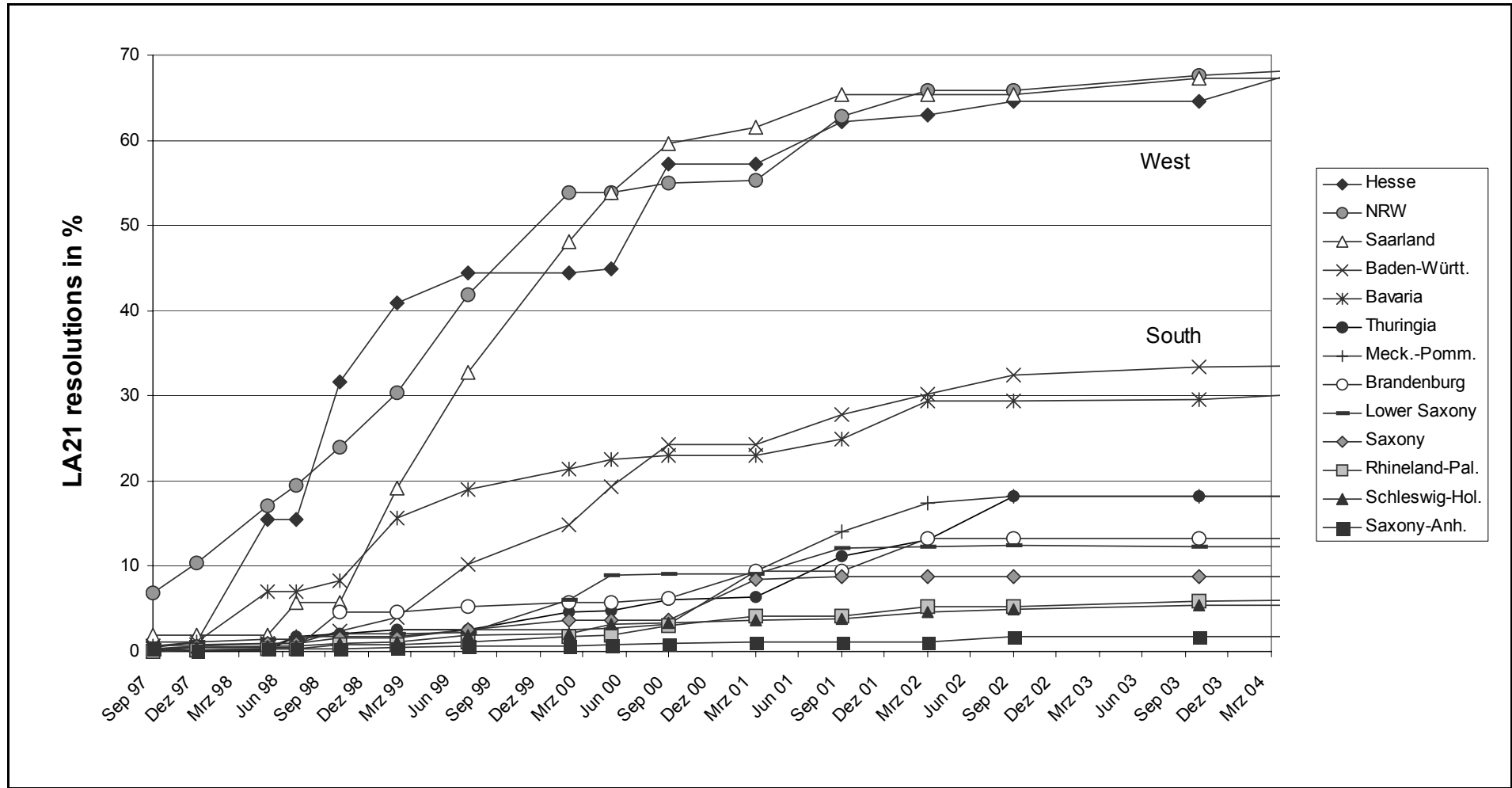
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# Annex



Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany

# Annex



**FIGURE A-1**

Development of local authorities with Local Agenda 21 resolutions from 1997 to 2004, in percent; counties are included but city-states have been excluded; status as of July 2004.



# Annex

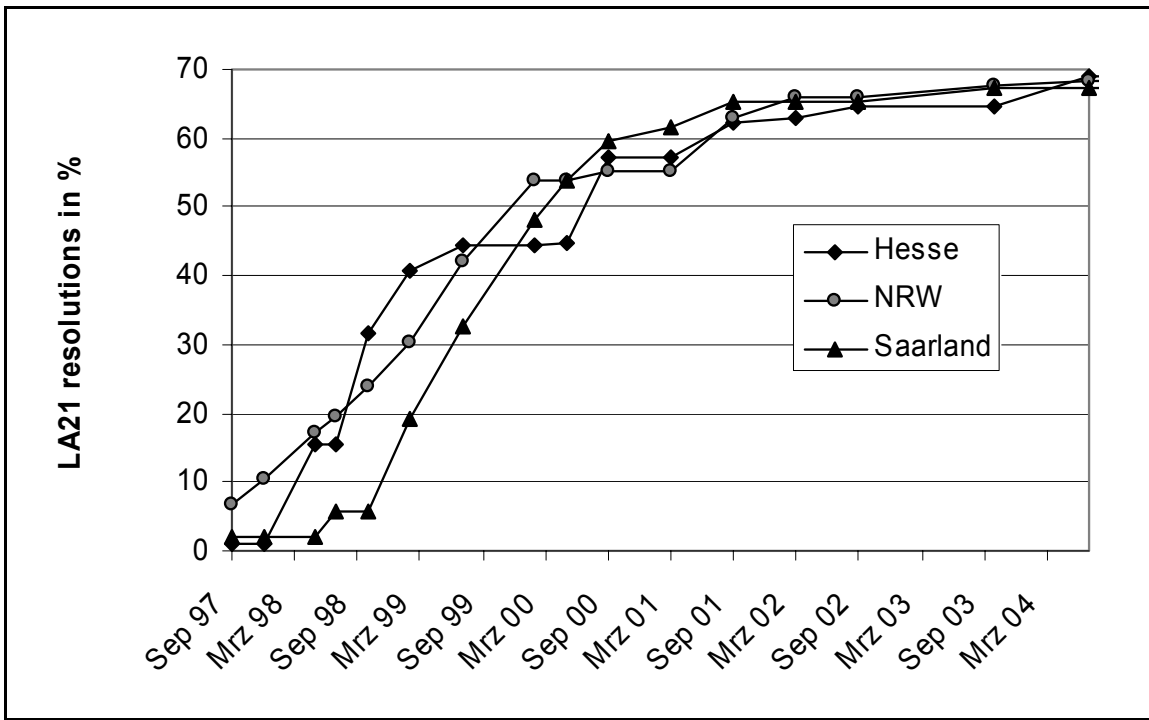


FIGURE A-2

Local Agenda 21 resolutions in Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Saarland in percent, from 1997 to 2004, including counties.

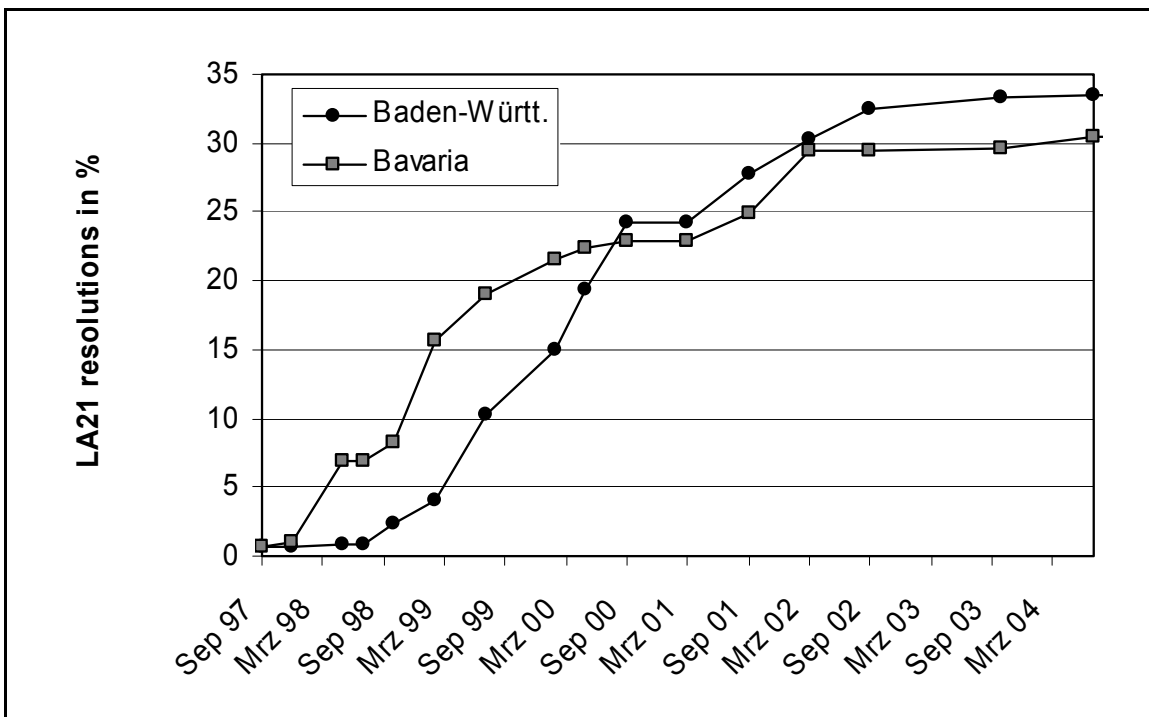


FIGURE A-3

Local Agenda 21 resolutions in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg in percent, from 1997 to 2004, including counties.

# Annex

**TABLE A-1**  
Local Authorities, Inhabitants, and Local Agenda 21 Resolutions by State

Land	Number of cities and towns, 2002 (31/12/2003)	Number of cities and towns with Local Agenda 21 resolutions (July 2004)	Cities and towns with (without) Local Agenda 21 resolutions in % (2004)	Number of counties (2002)	Number of counties with Agenda 21 resolutions (2004)	Counties with (without) Agenda 21 resolutions in % (2004)	Number of regional districts ( <i>Regierungsbezirke</i> ) (2002)	Cities and towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants in % (2001)	Number of inhabitants per municipality, 2002 (31/12/2003)
Berlin	1	1	100.0 (0)	-	-	-	-	0	3,388,434
Hamburg	1	1	100.0 (0)	-	-	-	-	0	1,726,363
Bremen	2	2	100.0 (0)	-	-	-	-	0	329,826
Hesse	426	281	66.0 (34.0)	21	9	42.9 (57.1)	3	60.1	14,267
Saarland	52	34	65.4 (34.6)	6	1	16.7 (83.3)	-	23.1	20,509
North Rhine-Westphalia	396	251	63.4 (36.6)	31	20	64.5 (35.5)	5	14.4	45,586
Baden-Württemberg	1,111	358	32.2 (67.8)	35	14	40.0 (60.0)	4	77.8	9,542
Bavaria	2,056	637	31.0 (69.0)	71	60	84.5 (15.5)	7	89.3	5,997
Thuringia	1,017 (1,006)	174	17.3 (82.7)	17	8	47.1 (52.9)	-	96.8	2,371 (2,359)

## Annex

Land	Number of cities and towns, 2002 (31/12/2003)	Number of cities and towns with Local Agenda 21 resolutions (July 2004)	Cities and towns with (without) Local Agenda 21 resolutions in % (2004)	Number of counties (2002)	Number of counties with Agenda 21 resolutions (2004)	Counties with (without) Agenda 21 resolutions in % (2004)	Number of regional districts ( <i>Regierungsbezirke</i> ) (2002)	Cities and towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants in % (2001)	Number of inhabitants per municipality, 2002 (31/12/2003)
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	989 (964)	152	15.8 (84.2)	12	6	50.0 (50.0)	-	97.5	1,779 (1,797)
Lower Saxony	1,026	109	15.4 (84.6)	38	17	44.7 (55.3)	4	80.4	7,755
Brandenburg	1,092 (436)	51	11.7 (88.3)	14	7	50.0 (50.0)		96.3	2,375 (5,906)
Saxony	539	46	8.5 (91.5)	22	0	0	3	87.0	8,134
Rhineland-Palatinate	2,306	124	5.4 (94.6)	24	16	66.7 (33.3)	3	98.0	1,756
Schleswig-Holstein	1,130	53	4.7 (95.3)	11	9	81.8 (18.2)	-	95.5	2,482
Saxony-Anhalt	1,272 (1,197)	20	1.7 (98.3)	21	0	0	3	97.1	2,029 (2,108)
Germany in toto	13,416 (12,489)	2,294	18.4 (81.6)	323	167	51.7 (48.3)	32	88.9	6,145

Data source: Statistisches Jahrbuch deutscher Gemeinden; Statistische Landesämter; Agenda Transfer — Agentur für Nachhaltigkeit 2004; own calculations.