

CITY OF HELSINKI

ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

Papers 1/2001

Experiences with Local Agenda 21 as a Policy Tool

Questionnaire among EUROCITIES Environment Committee Member Cities

(Version 30.4.2001)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

From the administration viewpoint, Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) is a unique tool for pursuing societal objectives. Its non-statutory and voluntary nature are essential elements of LA 21 thinking, in addition to the "Think globally - act locally" principle and the broad participation of various role players, as well as a bottom-up and long term approach. What the objectives of sustainable development are, as well as how to achieve them, has to be freely debated at local level - for instance in the city or in the neighbourhood - and relayed to the decision makers.

LA 21 is, by nature, an international campaign that in practice has been supported and also largely guided by international and national associations of cities and municipalities. In spite of the guidance, the models and the toolboxes, the approaches and means developed by cities have been their own solutions. It is now of interest to find out how LA 21 has been implemented in cities, what level of commitment it has received and what kind of experiences city administrations have had. In order to ascertain this, in November 2000 the Eurocities Environment Committee decided to carry out a small-scale questionnaire with its member cities concerning their LA 21 programme.

The intention is to benefit from the information obtained from the questionnaire when e.g. declaring the Eurocities Environment Committee's stand on the EU's existing sustainable development strategy (a European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development) and the White Paper on European Governance. The Commission is committed to presenting an EU strategy on sustainable development for the European Council meeting in Gothenburg in 2001 (COM (2001)31 final). The Commission published the first consultation paper in March 2001 (SEC(2001) 517). In the consultation paper the following questions, among others, are asked: Governments cannot deliver sustainable development on their own. Business, workers and civil society have an indispensable role. How do we make this happen? Are there any additions to the policy toolkit? The White paper on Governance will be published by July 2001. In the Work Programme of the Commission the LA 21 experiences with their work areas are presented as study targets in the section headed "Promoting coherence and co-operation within a "networked" Europe": examine LA 21 experiences for obtaining a better articulation of regional and environmental policy. (SEC(2000)1547/7 final). Another of the Eurocities organisation's basic tasks is to pass on information and experiences from one city to another and to make it possible to learn from each another. The documented experiences of other cities are of benefit to the City of Helsinki. Helsinki's own action programme on sustainable development is currently under preparation and the intention is to bring this before the City Council during the course of the present year.

1.2 Purpose of the questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out what experiences the cities have had with LA 21 work, both with the programme and the drawing up of the programme, and the significance of the programme as an administrative instrument. Experiences have been recorded on the one hand by studying the LA 21 processes as a new form of management, and on the other through questions about the content of LA

21 work. The primary target of the study are the personal activities of the city administrations. It is not possible to achieve sustainable development solely by administrative guidance and planning. On the contrary, it is only attainable through cooperation and commitment among all the stakeholders in the society. The activities and participation of other local role players has been given less attention, however, in this study.

The aim was, by means of the questionnaire, to ascertain the nature of LA 21 in different cities, to discover whether the starting point for the programme was, for example, the generation of a strategic programme, an environmental programme, or individual projects. The purpose was also to clarify whether any common themes could be found in the different cities and whether any conclusions could be drawn from these themes in regard to what the most important environmental questions for large European cities are from the perspective of LA 21. The questionnaire also enquired about the relationship of the programmes to the city's other planning. Finally, the respondents were asked to relate their experiences of the agenda as a policy instrument, its area of application and the prospects for continuation.

The summary that is based on this questionnaire does not provide any complete answers, but it directs us towards searching for information from local agenda offices, or studies carried out, or the parties carrying these out.

The contact information for LA 21 contact persons in the cities who responded, as well as some references to literature and Internet sites as sources of further information are appended. (see chapter 5)

1.3 Carrying out the questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to approximately 60 Eurocities by e-mail in December 2000, to the environmental officer/ environmental administration representative of the member city's environmental committee. After the repeat questionnaire (January 2001), 31 responses in all were received. At least one response was received from nearly all of the EU member states, while from many countries there were responses from several cities. In order to elicit more specific information supplementary questions were sent by e-mail to those who sent in the responses to the first questionnaire. Twenty cities answered the supplementary questions.

The summary to this questionnaire is based on the officers' own experiences. Written answers to the questionnaire and not, for example, brochures or other publications (with the exception of Munich, which sent a project report instead of answers to the questionnaire) were used as the material for reporting on the LA 21 work of the cities replying to the questionnaire. Where research data was available, an effort was made to use it to shed further light on the issue. For example, several studies were carried out on the Helsinki LA 21 process (see appendix X).

There was a limited amount of time available for carrying out the questionnaire and preparing the summary, to ensure that the results could be utilised in the preparatory work for the EU strategy for sustainable development being prepared this spring. It has, therefore, been impossible within the framework of the timetable to further process or supplement the answers, and the results of the questionnaire form a guideline. The conclusions are those of the writers of the summary.

1.4 Concepts and international starting points

Abbreviations

EC Eurocities
EU European Union
ICLEI International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
LA 21 Local Agenda 21
UBC Union of the Baltic Cities
UN United Nations
SD Sustainable Development

Sustainable development

Sustainable development has been defined in various connections with different degrees of emphasis. Globally the most renowned of these has been the definition given in the Brundtland Commission's report "Our Common Future" in 1987, according to which sustainable development constitutes "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The basic elements of sustainable development have become economic, ecological and social, as well as cultural, sustainability, which are interdependent and mutually supportive subfactors. Sustainable development is the integration of all these dimensions. The cities have defined sustainable development in their own terms. Birmingham, for instance, calls it "Living today with tomorrow in mind", while Dublin defines it as "Our city, our choice, our future".

Ecological sustainability

The conservation of biodiversity and the adaptation of mankind's economic and materialistic activities to the world's natural resources and the tolerance of the environment.

Local Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a sustainable development action programme for this (the 21st) century which was approved at the United Nations' UNCED conference held in Rio in 1992. The Agenda 21 protocol is an extensive one covering global environment and development problems. The latter include climate change, a reduction in biodiversity, and the fair distribution of natural resources. From the municipalities' standpoint the document's 28th chapter is of primary importance, this dealing with the role of the local administration in promoting sustainable development. At Rio, all the world's cities and municipalities were challenged to prepare a sustainable development action programme - a Local Agenda 21.

Subsequent to the Rio conference, the interpretation of sustainable development has been deepened at major conferences and theme conferences of the UN, as well as at the UN's 1997 special assembly on sustainable development (Rio +5). The next appraisal of the situation regarding sustainable development will be made in 2002 at the special assembly (Rio +10) in South Africa.

The Agenda 21 programme has parts in common with the UK's community development Habitat programme approved in Istanbul in 1996. The Habitat Agenda has two main themes, i.e. a proper home for everyone, and sustainable social development in an urbanising world. It is estimated that the Habitat Agenda will be implemented in June 2001 at a special sitting of the UN General Assembly in New York (Istanbul +5).

Aalborg Charter

The Aalborg Charter constitutes an agreement between European cities which was approved at the environmental conference of cities in Aalborg (Ålborg) in 1994. The cities which were signatories to this charter have undertaken to prepare a local agenda. By signing the charter, a city joins the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign. By the beginning of April 2001, more than 1,100 European local and regional authorities had signed the Charter.

The Aalborg Charter defines the local agenda process as a process progressing in stages and in which the different stakeholders (city administration, inhabitants and their organisations, and the business sector) commit themselves to the aims of sustainable development and together develop operating models commensurate with the partnership principle and interactive planning.

At the second European cities conference on sustainable development held in Lisbon in 1996, the Lisbon action programme supplementing the Aalborg Charter was approved. At the third European cities conference on sustainable development at Hanover in 2000 the EU's sustainable development indicator project was launched.

The EU's sustainable development policies

In conjunction with the Rio conference referred to above, a start was made on the preparation of a sustainable development policy within the EU as well. The 5th Environment Action Programme (1992-1999), entitled "Towards sustainability", incorporated new measures and a broader commitment to the integration of environmental concerns in other policies. Following this, in the Amsterdam agreement sustainable development was set as one of the EU's objectives. The sixth Environment Action Programme, entitled "Environment 2010: Our future, Our choice", will shortly be approved. The new programme targets the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

From the cities' perspective the Commission's bulletin of 1998 on "Developing sustainable development in the European Union: action framework (COM(98)605)" is also of significance.

2. The implementation of LA 21 in the EC Environment Committee member cities

Of the 60 cities which received the questionnaire, responses were received from 31, and of these 20 answered the additional questions for eliciting further details.

Table 1: The EC Environment Committee member cities and the associated cities that answered by country (cities marked with * also answered the additional questions).

The EC Environment Committee member cities:

Austria	Vienna *	Sweden	Gothenburg *
Belgium	Brussels		Malmö *
Denmark	Copenhagen *		Stockholm *
Finland	Helsinki *	UK	Birmingham
	Tampere *		Bristol
	Turku *		Newcastle
France	(Greater) Lyon		Nottingham
	Lille		Sheffield *
Germany	Hamburg *		
	Cologne *		
	Munich (brochure)		
Ireland	Dublin *		
Italy	Bologna *		
	Palermo *		
	Venice		
Netherlands	Amsterdam *		
	Eindhoven *		
	Rotterdam		
	Utrecht*		
Spain	Barcelona		

The associated cities:

Latvia	Riga *
Norway	Oslo *
Poland	Katowice *

2.1 LA 21 process is under way in all 31 cities that responded

When asked whether the city had an LA 21 programme, there was no direct, unequivocal answer to such an ostensibly uncomplicated question, but the respondents interpreted it in different ways. The most usual interpretation was to answer "Yes" where the process was already well under way and, for example, already had council approval on starting although the action programme itself had not yet been completed. Then again, Helsinki, for instance, responded that the agenda was in the preparation phase, although the work had already progressed very far, but the final programme was not yet approved (see table 2). The stage at which each city's LA 21 work is cannot therefore be directly concluded from the cities' answers.

Twenty of the cities which responded answered "Yes" and eight cities answered that the agenda was in course of preparation. The other three cities (Amsterdam, Gothenburg, Riga) answered "No", but these cities' sustainable development work is also comparable with the sustainable development work of other cities. In Amsterdam there is an Environment Policy Plan, in which LA 21 is incorporated. Gothenburg reported that there was no overall LA 21 programme but all the city's different committees/ administrations and city owned companies are taking part in LA 21 work and each of the 21 districts has an LA 21 co-ordinator. Three of the districts call themselves "ecological districts" (those are working on, or have made, an integrated LA 21 plan). In Riga they have not yet developed an LA 21 strategy but they do have an Environmental Strategy, which is based on the principles of the sustainable development.

No "No" answers were received. However, this still does not mean that the city in question does not have an agenda; it could mean that the questionnaire sent by e-mail may not, for example, have been received. Thus, no conclusions are drawn in this study regarding the prevalence of LA 21 in other member cities of the EC Environmental Committee.

2.1.1. Most Local Agenda 21 strategies/programmes are adopted by the City Council

The City Council is the city's highest decision-making authority; it approves plans and development strategies. In Finland, the municipal political system has participated in the LA 21 process as an initiator and adopter of the sustainable development action programme (Häikiö p. 24). We asked the cities if the LA 21 has been adopted by the City Council or other administrative level. Our assumption was that LA 21 adopted by the City Council might have a greater significance in the city's work than if it is not.

Among the cities responding, LA 21 has been either adopted by the City Council or has been forwarded for its approval. Additionally, in two of the cities the agenda has either been brought before the council, or considered by the latter. It has not always been clear whether the council has considered the agenda in the initial phase of the process or, for instance, when the programme has been completed. In four cities, the agenda had either been adopted or will be adopted at some other level of decision-making, in Lille and Lyon, for example, as a form of regional cooperation in Lille Metropole and Greater Lyon, and in Palermo by the municipal administration. In Tampere, the agenda, which has been prepared by NGOs, will not be brought before the council but will be incorporated in the city strategy.

Thus, the City Council would appear in principle to play a significant part in the LA-21 process in major European cities, which would also give a direct indication that the most common mode of action in LA-21 work is the municipal model¹. In practice, what kind of resources have been

¹ Modes of action in LA 21 work can be distinguished on the basis of who the principal role players are and how the work is organised in practice. The modes of action include municipal level, citizen-biased and expert-centric models. (Häikiö p. 19.)

appropriated for the LA 21 work is also an important factor. Cooperation within metropolitan areas does not appear to be the main factor from the decision-making perspective, with the notable exceptions of Lille and Lyon.

Table 2: Local Agenda 21 (or some other sustainable development project) is under way in all the 31 cities replying to the questionnaire. Most of the LA 21 agendas are/will be adopted by the City Council.

		Local Agenda 21		Adopted by		
		Yes	In prep.	CC	Munic./Dist r.	None
Austria	Vienna		X		X	
Belgium	Brussels		X			
Denmark	Copenhagen	X		X		
Finland	Helsinki		X	X		X ²
	Tampere	X				
France	Turku	X		X		
	(Greater) Lyon		X		X	
Germany	Lille		X			
	Hamburg		X	X		
Ireland	Cologne	X		X		
	Munich	X		X		
Italy	Dublin	X		X ³		
Latvia	Bologna	X		X		
	Palermo	X			X	
	Venice	X		X		
Netherlands	Riga	X ⁴		X ⁵		
Norway	Amsterdam	X ⁶		X		
	Eindhoven		X	X		
	Rotterdam	X		X		
Poland	Utrecht	X		X		
Spain	Oslo	X		X ⁷		
Sweden	Katowice	X		X		
UK	Barcelona		X	X		
	Gothenburg	X ⁸			X ⁹	
	Malmö	X		X		
UK	Stockholm	X		X ¹⁰		
	Birmingham	X		X		
	Bristol	X		X		
	Newcastle	X ¹¹				
	Nottingham	X		X		
	Sheffield	X		X		

² "Tampere 21" will be included in the new City Strategy.

³ In Dublin the LA 21 has been presented to the City Council and referred for discussion to the Strategic Policy Committees.

⁴ In Riga they have not yet developed the LA 21 strategy, but the Environmental Strategy is based on the principles of the sustainable development.

⁵ The Environmental Strategy was adopted by the City Council.

⁶ In Amsterdam there is an Environment Policy Plan, in which LA 21 is incorporated (+ 1 LA 21 in one district).

⁷ In Oslo the Urban Ecological Program is adopted by City Council and ratified by the City Parliament. The local agendas are adopted by the district councils.

⁸ There is no overall LA 21 programme in Gothenburg, but all the city's different committees/ administrations and city owned companies are taking part in LA 21 work and each of the 21 districts has an LA 21 co-ordinator.

⁹ The local Environment and Public Health Councils have adopted the local district Environmental Plan and Public Health Plan, but none of the LA 21 plans for districts have yet been adopted by the District Committee concerned.

¹⁰ In Stockholm the LA 21 strategy was discussed by the City Council. Also the decision that the work with indicators for sustainable development should go on was made in City Council.

¹¹ Agenda 21 in Newcastle is not under the name of LA 21 but embedded into the workings of the city.

2.1.2 The nature and starting points of the LA 21 process

The goals of local agenda work can be understood in a broad variety of ways and there is by no means always only one correct way of implementing them. Those cities adopting the Aalborg Charter are committed to preparing a local agenda, which has led to different interpretations. At least in Finland, it is common for the aim of the LA 21 process to be to produce a sustainable development action programme. In this case, the programme can be a long term strategic plan which will henceforth influence the content of the municipality's other plans. According to another point of view, the LA 21 programme forms a tool for objectifying the municipality's sustainable development policy or environment programme. (Häikiö p. 22). Different countries have also adopted different methods of implementation, which may have altered over the years. This has taken place in Sweden, for example¹².

The cities were asked, through brief criteria, to define the criteria and requirements for their LA 21 work. The aim of this question was to clarify the nature of the LA 21 process and the kind of instrument the cities wanted to use it as. The answers varied greatly due to the different administrative cultures of the cities and the processes could not be classified or compared on the basis of these. As a general summary it can, however, be stated that the agenda includes a strategic programme/plan and a list of projects in nearly all of the cities (26) that responded. These separate projects were either internal projects of the city administration or local/neighbourhood projects of the residents or citizens' organisations.

This group of 26 cities also included those where the environmental programme is a strategic part of LA 21 or where LA 21 was reported as being included in the city's sustainable development plan, as the relationship between the local agenda and the environment programme is understood in different cities in different ways. The implementation of the ecological, social and economic dimensions of the local agenda always varies according to the city's own themes. So the Environmental Policy plan, for example, may have been more multi-dimensional than the LA 21 programme, which lacks the "environmental" prefix, but is clearly more confined in its themes to environmental questions.

Exceptions to these strategy type LA 21 programmes are examples, as reported by cities like Eindhoven and Rotterdam, of agenda work consisting of separate projects.

2.1.3 State support for the cities varies

In compliance with the Rio protocol, the national administration and international role players should support Agenda LA 21 local level programmes. The European cities themselves have different positions with regard to state support for LA 21 work. In the background there are also administrative differences between the different countries and differences in the level of local self-government.

In the following paragraphs, the respondents to the questionnaire report on the financial or other support received by the cities.

¹² See Local Agenda 21 – a European Comparison, pages 113 and 150. When LA 21 work started in Sweden, the intention of most communities was to have as a result a document with long-term goals, guidelines and actions adopted by the council. This approach gradually gave way to the view that agreeing on and implementing projects was more important than producing a document. In the latter case it was easier to secure the participation of role players outside the administration for such projects. Recently, however, many communities have been feeling a need to give the numerous projects a common "umbrella" in the form of a mission statement or similar vision

In Italy, according to Palermo's and Bologna's answers, the State has been allocating funds to implement environmental and sustainable practices and a national commitment to LA 21. In the Netherlands, according to the answers from Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Rotterdam, the State does not support LA 21 process financially, but it promotes LA 21 and uses the concept of LA 21 in environmental planning. The State also offered a guideline about how to use and implement LA 21, but guidance to cities is mostly given by non-governmental organisations (which are financially supported by the government).

In Germany, according to the answers from Cologne and Hamburg, the National Government has not supported LA 21 work, but the Regional Government (Länder) has been very active and has given support with guidelines, workshops and funding.

In the same way, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities in Finland has supported Finnish LA 21 work. One Finnish city, Turku, also mentioned that the city had received funding from the "Fund for Development and Research Work for Environmental Protection" (Kokeilu- ja kehittämisrahat) and from the Regional Council.

In Norway, the State has not launched the concept strongly in public, but it is offering guidance and funding together with the Norwegian Local Council Association.

The Swedish National Government offered guidance in the form of various decisions. One guideline was that as from 1997 every municipality in Sweden should have an LA 21 programme ready. The funding is administered through a programme called a Local Investment Programme given as economic support from the Ministry of the Environment. Larger projects have the opportunity to seek money from this fund. For instance, Stockholm received some € 65 million from this investment programme. Some of these projects were so-called local adult education projects (which have more of an LA 21 profile) and others were ordinary environmental projects (such as replacing the traffic light bulbs with diodes and the remediation of contaminated soil at Hammarby Sjöstad).

In Denmark, the government has offered guidance in the form of an information campaign. It has not given funding. In 2000, the government decided that every municipality and county must prepare an LA 21 strategy by 2003.

In Latvia, the concept of LA 21 has received some support, but no national funding mechanism is in place to support the LA 21 process. Limited coordination of LA 21 work in Latvia is provided by a focal point at the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, which supported and promoted a project (financed by EU-PHARE) to train LA 21 co-ordinators.

It seems that, in the main, the State has not so much participated in the cities' work for sustainable development, but according to the answers it is expressly the cooperation between and among cities and municipalities that has played a large role in the local agenda work. For more information on this subject see, for example, the study on Local Agenda 21 in the European Countries (Local Agenda 21: A European Comparison, 1999).

The EU has also supported the cities' sustainable development activities and many of the cities and their networks have received financial support for their projects from the EU programme.

2.1.4 Involving the private business sector

The questionnaire did not specifically probe into the participation of the private business sector in the agenda work. In Bologna, the private business sector was represented in the Forum, in Amsterdam it played a part in the drafting of the Environmental Policy Plan, in Barcelona this sector participated in the Economy and Strategy Plan preparation, while in Oslo, according to the answer given, acceptance and activities among companies in this context are increasing. The sixth mention was Gothenburg, in which the city-owned companies are involved in the agenda work.

In Munich, the economy and labour has been defined as one of the main areas within LA 21 process. There have been special programmes to improve sustainability in industry and businesses, as well as new opportunities for employment.

The English cities form a group of their own, in which participation by local organisations has become important as the mode of action. In Bristol, LA 21 is well understood by business. In Newcastle, the LA 21 strategy was adopted by the Council and 60 organisations from public and private sectors. In Sheffield, businesses are involved at a strategic level through the Sheffield First Partnership, specifically the environmental sector through the Green Business Forum, and at a local level through the many regeneration partnerships.

The examples are interesting and topical. Some of the cities' services have been made into, or in the future will be made into, business affairs or given to the third sector to handle. When comparing European Local Agendas, the involvement of the business sector was mentioned as a challenge for further work on LA 21 (Local Agenda 21: A European Comparison, 1999).

2.2 The emphasis IN LA 21 programmes varies from an environmental approach to a more multi-faceted approach

The essence of sustainable development incorporates the three dimensions ecological, social and economic. In addition, the cultural dimension is mentioned in various contexts. LA 21 is often considered as purely a question of environmental protection (e.g. Häikiö 2000, abstract) and sustainable development appears only as an ecological measure. The cities were asked if LA 21 is divided by themes or by local areas and what the main themes are. The aim of this question was to ascertain whether this idea of the different dimensions of sustainable development has been implemented, or whether the ecological aspect, for example, is emphasised.

In nearly all (28) of the cities that responded, LA 21 (or a corresponding programme for sustainable development reported by the city) is divided into themes. Six of the cities also have separate area agendas (e.g. agendas for city districts), in addition to the themed programme for the whole city. Oslo, Rotterdam and Vienna reported that the agenda work is only divided up by area.

Dublin listed the main themes of the City's LA 21 process, but stated that the LA 21 process is currently evolving through a holistic approach into all elements of Dublin Corporation's strategic, managerial and operational responsibilities. Hence there are no formal structures (as the division mentioned above) in place. In Munich, a lesson learned is that special attention has to be devoted to the fact that sustainability is not environmental care but also a question of social justice and economic efficiency.

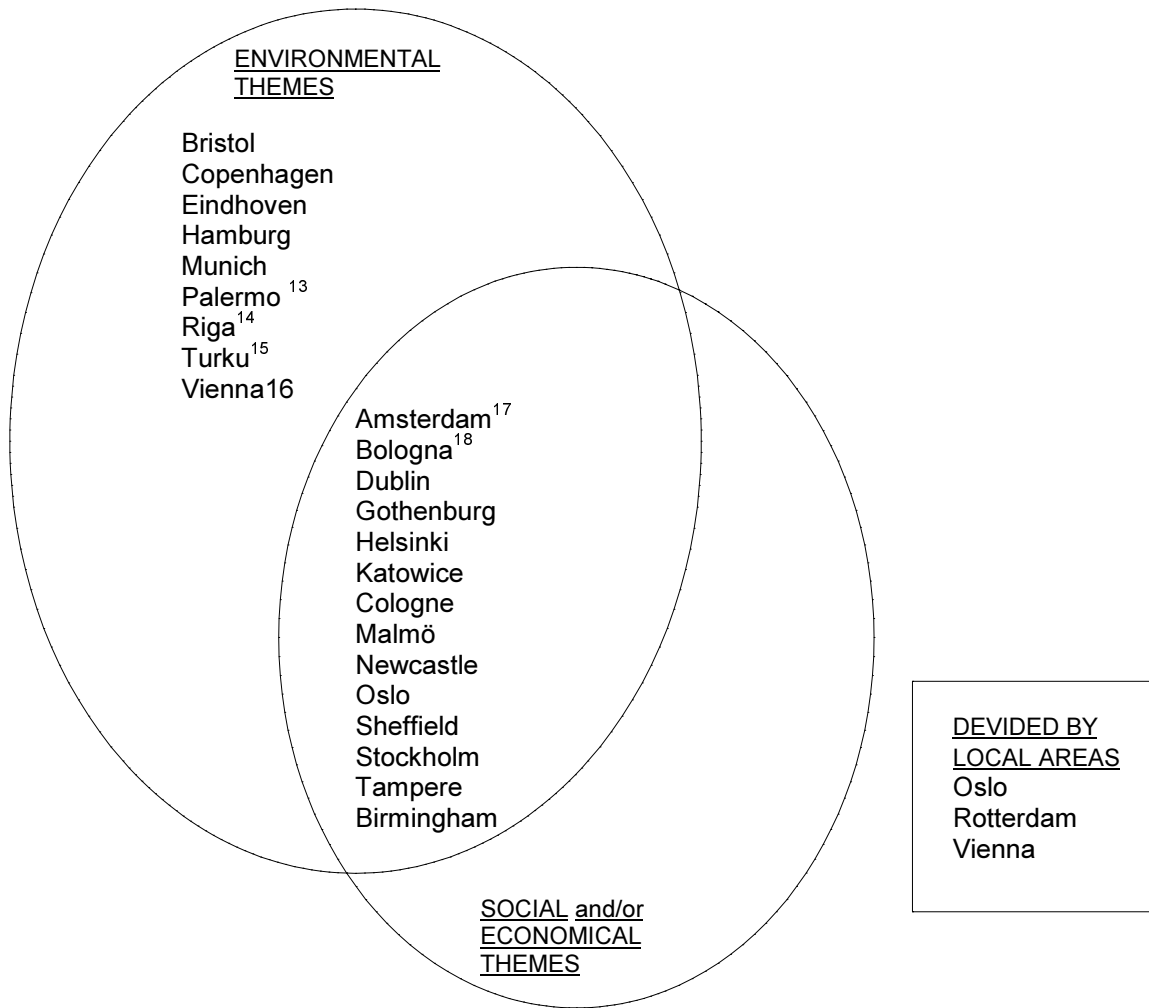
Seven of the cities that listed themes had only ecological/environmental themes, and three of the cities which responded had both ecological and social themes. On the basis of the themes, nine

cities included all three dimensions of sustainable development in their agendas. This classification is, however, only a guide. For instance, the City of Turku's themes did indeed appear to concentrate on environmental questions, but on the other hand the city reported elsewhere on the separate "East Turku project" which probably includes the social aspect missing from the list of LA 21 themes.

In a couple of the answers the respondent made their own observation that LA 21 in their cities is too environmentally-weighted. For instance, Bologna stated that *"It is necessary to focus not only on the pure environment but we must extend the issues to socio-economic features and aspects concerning the quality of life. That way also more sectors and departments will be involved."*

Newcastle's answer, however, stood out as, when describing the city's forthcoming Community Strategies system, they suspected that the social and economic aspects would, however, be emphasised at the expense of the ecological aspect: *"--- However in the UK there is little awareness or interest in the global environmental issues and so most people are focusing on the local environment. Global warming is seen as less important than grass cutting and graffiti. It is likely that sustainability will be successfully incorporated into policy making but that in this the environmental dimension will be clouded by the social and economic."*

Figure 1: In the following figure the cities are listed according to whether LA 21 is divided by themes or by local areas. Those cities where LA 21 is divided by themes are further classified according to whether the different dimensions of sustainable development are included in the themes. This latter classification is, however, only a guide.



¹³ The LA 21 process has just started in Palermo.

¹⁴ The Environmental Strategy.

¹⁵ The city does have e.g. the 'East Turku' project which certainly includes a social theme.

¹⁶ Included in the "Strategic City Plan", districts' own themes extra.

¹⁷ Environmental Policy Plan, in which the LA 21 is incorporated.

¹⁸ Environmental indicators.

The most common urban themes

In asking about the main themes in the cities' LA 21 programmes it was interesting to see whether the themes were the same among the different cities or whether they differed from each other. One ambitious aim was to conclude what, from the LA 21 perspective, were the most important environmental questions for Europe's large cities. It was not quite possible to do this within the framework of this questionnaire, but the typical problems for large cities (e.g. city planning, traffic and mobility, land use and air quality) appeared, however, as the most usual environmental themes.

In its study on the LA 21 processes in its member countries, the UCB discusses in what sectors LA 21 activities have taken place (see *Local Agenda 21: A European Comparison*, 1999).

Most commonly there are 4–15 different main themes on the cities' agenda. The figure (figure 2) lists the themes of the cities that responded. The most usual themes are listed in the figure, while the individual subjects are listed on the side. The LA 21 themes of the different cities are listed in more detail in, for example, the studies by Joas (1999) and Häikiö.

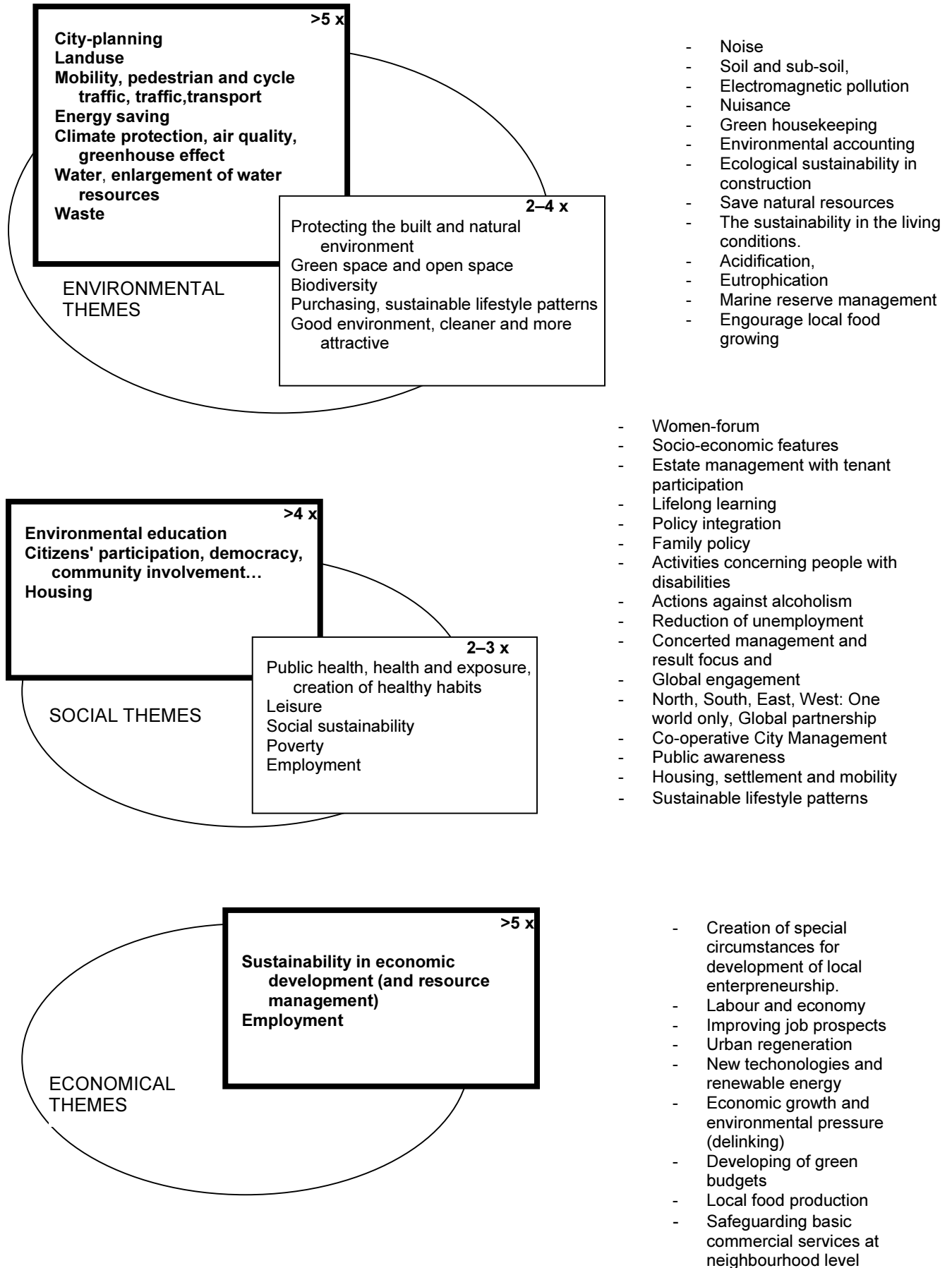
In its consultation paper (SEC (2001)517) the Commission proposes the following six topics as priorities in the forthcoming European SD strategy:

- climate change and clean energy
- public health
- management of natural resources
- poverty and social exclusion
- ageing and demography
- mobility, land use and territorial development.

When a comparison with the above table is made, it becomes apparent that in particular the environmental themes and the placing of emphasis are similar to what the cities have chosen.

Figure 2: Two thirds of the cities' LA 21 programme themes cover environmental matters. A direct conclusion cannot be made from this regarding the mutual relationship of the themes. For example "social sustainability" may, in the practical implementation stage, be divided into several different projects, but in the city's theme list it is only counted as one theme.

There was also a great number of individual themes reported by the cities. Perhaps the one which stands out most from the familiar environmental subjects, was the "electromagnetic pollution" theme listed by Bologna.



2.3 The link between LA 21 work and the city's other planning and decision making

The cities were asked to answer how the LA 21 process, which in the main is prepared in the environmental sector, has generally gone through the other city administration, to what extent the other administrative bodies have been active in the LA 21 work, and how LA 21 is combined with the city's other strategic planning and decision making. In the supplementary questionnaire the cities were also asked to report on any possible funding or expert help received for local/neighbourhood projects.

2.3.1 Most of the LA 21 work is often done by the environmental sector and active citizens

The responsibility for steering the LA 21 process has usually been given to the environmental administration (see i.e. Joas 1999, 13 and Local Agenda 21: A European Comparison 1999, 138). In the additional questions the cities were asked about the participation of other sectors/administrative bodies in the agenda work. In at least eight cities the answers showed that other administrative bodies actively participated in the agenda work. Eight cities answered "some/to some extent" and three cities reported that the other administrative bodies did not participate in the LA 21 work, at least yet. The general impression was that in many cities the agenda has been left for projects organised by the environmental authorities and active citizens. However, in the comparison of European Local Agendas, one conclusion was that it is crucial for forms of impetus to come not only from the environmental, but also from the economic and social, sectors (Local Agenda 21: A European Comparison 1999, 5).

Table 3: Information on the activity of other administrative bodies was received from 18 cities. Other active departments in the cities include the City planning, Education and Youth, and Public works departments.

Others active	Some/to some extent active	Others not active (yet)
- Copenhagen	- Amsterdam	- Eindhoven
- Gothenburg	- Bologna	- Palermo
- Helsinki	- Dublin	- Tampere
- Katowice	- Hamburg	
- Malmö	- Cologne	
- Riga	- Oslo	
- Stockholm	- Turku	
	- Vienna	

2.3.2 The link with the city's other planning and decision making

On asking about the links to the city's other planning we received different answers, again due in part to differences in administrative culture. Some of the respondents explained only the formal, official links (e.g. coordination of plans) and some listed those plans in which, for example, environmental perspectives or recycling were mentioned or taken into consideration. Thus, on analysing the answers to this question, we did not proceed to interpret the practical significance but simply took each answer at its face value.

The most common answer (19) was that LA 21 "supports/ is always a part of / forms a frame of reference/ should be taken into account" in the city's other planning. However, the answers showed that in most of the cities LA 21 was held to be a rather distinct programme, more of a vision than a binding plan. Thus, in practice the influence of the LA 21 programme on the city's other planning appears to remain only at the "should be taken into account" level. A comment that repeatedly came up in the answers was that the programme in question was a voluntary one with the practical

implementation relying on the decision maker's goodwill – whereas many other strategies or plans are statutory.

“The difficulty comes in trying to knit the LA 21 activity together within a strategic or corporate management framework.” (Sheffield)

Sheffield's answer above formulated a common difficulty in LA 21 work according to the answers describing the link between LA 21 and the other planning of the city. For example, Oslo stated that the implementation of LA 21 is dependent upon its being followed up by the budgets/economy plans of the different agencies.

Again, mention of the non-statutory basis of LA 21 was quite common in the answers. For instance, in Nottingham it was seen that *“the LA 21 is very useful in helping people from a range of different organisations, sectors and viewpoints to discuss a common theme and develop action plans accordingly. Given its non-statutory basis, it is more difficult to influence mainstream policies.”* However, the answer stated that in Nottingham they enjoy political support and have a committed Chief Executive, so they have been able to make progress on sustainability.

Bristol also answered that they rely on goodwill to achieve action, but the respondent wrote that, for instance, biodiversity and air quality are having an increasing influence and as climate change problems become more evident so does the success of LA 21.

According to Bristol's, Sheffield's and Newcastle's answers, the move towards strategic or community planning in English towns and cities also means that the LA 21 work may become subsumed in the new duty plan for social/economic and environmental well-being. Based on the answers, Tampere and Katowice also seem to have chosen a similar model in implementing LA 21. This means that the agenda will be included in the City Strategy, and then it will, according to the answers, affect the planning system at every level in the City. It will also form a part of the City's normal budgeting system.

“The most difficult task is to obtain real and substantial commitments for sustainability among political decision makers” (Helsinki).

Dublin reported that the LA 21 philosophy underpins all strategic policy documents and the Dublin Corporation has a stated and strong commitment to sustainable development, which is clearly evident in all Dublin Corporation policy documents and in the evolving democratic framework encompassing Integrated Area Plans, Strategic Policy Committees and Area Committees for the conduct of local council business. Even so, the complaint about how it requires time and patience to make LA 21 popular and to change people's way of thinking was more common. This was brought up by Cologne, Lyon, Vienna and Helsinki.

Hamburg also brought up the conflict between the LA 21 work and economic considerations: *“The idea of LA 21 is constantly part of the working programmes of the administration of Hamburg.--- The good idea of LA 21 alone is not enough as a mainspring. For the policy or economic decisions the motivation is still the short - or medium - term individual benefit. If the benefit is guaranteed, the work can be done in the framework of the Agenda 21 as well.”*

In the Netherlands, there seems to be no formal link so far between the LA 21 process and the other planning system of the city. In Amsterdam, instead of LA 21 they have an Environmental Policy Plan, which predates LA 21. All the city sectors use the same system. Hence, although there is no formal link, it is, according to the answer, quite easy for different sectors to participate in each

other's plans and programmes. In Eindhoven, the City facilitates LA 21 initiatives from citizens and non-governmental organisations. Eindhoven stated that, notwithstanding the fact that LA 21 is initiated and financed by the city, it is still a very external process in which the city administration is itself not directly involved with the content. This year the philosophy will start to become embedded in the Eindhoven civil administration, following the reorganisation of the city administration.

Bologna and Riga reported that the LA 21 programme only influenced planning in the environmental sector.

2.3.3 Many cities support local/neighbourhood projects

Information on funding or professional assistance received for local/neighbourhood projects was only requested in the supplementary questions, and such information was received from 19 cities. The questions specifically attempted to ascertain separate funding channelled into projects, and not agenda process funding in general. Nor was any study made here about whether the support for the projects was continuous or in the nature of a single grant, the desire being to simply establish examples of the status of local/neighbourhood projects in different cities.

Table 4: About 21 respondents reported on the financial support and professional assistance offered by the city for the local/neighbourhood projects.

	Professional assistance	No professional assistance
Funding	Copenhagen ¹⁹ Eindhoven (90 000 €/year) Gothenburg (200 000 €/year) Helsinki (170 000 €/year) Cologne (50 000 €/year) Malmö (220 000 €/year) Vienna ²⁰ Newcastle (100 000/year)	Bologna Oslo (20 000 €/year) Riga ²¹ Sheffield ²² Stockholm (220 000 €/year) Turku
No funding	Dublin	Amsterdam ²³ Birmingham Hamburg Palermo Tampere

¹⁹ City has a fund for supporting the Urban Ecology Projects (DKK 1.5 million /year). In the past year the city also gave economic support for local "Green Guides" in the city districts.

²⁰ A proposal for financial and organisational support has been sent to the City Council, but has not been decided yet. Part of the proposal is also for a central co-ordinator, who will provide support with expertise to all the participating districts and co-ordinate their work.

²¹ Funding available from the city in the form of co-financing guarantees for project proposals submitted to international environmental projects (EU LIFE, EU PHARE Small Project Fund, EU PHARE ACCESS)

²² No funding under the LA 21 "banner" but through the Area Action Approach (which splits the city into 13 areas).

²³ No special budget for LA 21 activities, but about 700 000 € yearly for the integration of the environment in other projects.

Thirteen cities in all reported on city funding for local/neighbourhood projects, and half of these cities also offered professional assistance when required. The amount of funding varied from 20,000 Euros in Oslo to 220,000 Euros in Stockholm and in Malmö. It should again be pointed out, however, that the interpretations vary. For instance, local/neighbourhood projects may receive support under some heading other than LA 21, as with Newcastle and Sheffield.

In Dublin, no financial assistance is earmarked for projects, but professional assistance is available. Five respondents reported that the projects do not receive any assistance from the city. Of these cities, Birmingham stated that the lack of funding for projects was "a major failing of the process in the UK".

Indicators

It proved impossible to reliably assess the permanence of the activities of the cities' organisations without truly applicable and descriptive gauges based on clear sustainability criteria and specified sustainability objectives. Indicators of this kind serve needs in city planning, following-up and decision-making. The gauges should also assist self-assessment and following-up by NGOs, different stakeholder groups, and private citizens.

Cities were asked whether they had developed indicators for sustainable development. Based on the replies (28 replies to this question were received), 18 cities now use sustainable development indicators, five cities are developing these (some also being former indicators of the environmental state), while three replied that they had no indicators. The number of indicators being adopted by the cities varies between 10 and 73. The level of adoption of the indicators continues to vary. Indicator reports have been published by e.g. Birmingham.

The need to use indicators was expressed in different ways by different cities. Sheffield stated that they act as a management tool reporting for sustainable development at a strategic and local area level. Stockholm replied that their sustainable development indicators, as strategic work, involve a lot of sectors covering economic, social, ecological and democratic dimensions.

Taulukko 5: Two out of three cities either have sustainable development indicators or the indicators are at the development stage.

The city has sustainable development indicators		The sustainable development indicators are at the development stage.
Amsterdam	Malmö	Dublin
Bologna ²⁴	Munich	Eindhoven
Bristol	Newcastle	Göteborg
Cologne	Nottingham	Riga
Copenhagen	Oslo	Turku
Hamburg	Sheffield	
Helsinki	Stockholm	
Lille	Utrecht	
Lyon	Vienna	

The indicators in many cities are still at the development stage. In their indicator development work the cities have generally concentrated on creating their own indicators to satisfy their own

²⁴ Environmental indicators.

requirements. Among the cities replying to the questionnaire, nine had taken part in the EU Common Indicator project and this was not separately queried. The project was launched in the spring of 1999 by the Urban Expert Group appointed by the Commission. The purpose of the project has been, on the one hand, to support local authorities in their SD work and, on the other, to produce objective and comparable data on European sustainable development. In the project, Eurocities has maintained the contacts between the working group and local authorities working in various parts of Europe. The cities have been able to monitor the progress of this pilot-type project in conjunction with the EC Environment Committee's activities. (Technical report January 2000.)

3. LA 21 as a policy tool – difficult and time consuming, though fascinating in terms of the citizen participation approach

The promotion of sustainable development and LA 21 as a policy tool sets a real challenge for large cities. The replies to the questionnaire emphasise the problems associated with implementing the LA 21 process for large organisations.

When the cities were asked about their experiences with the use of LA 21 as a policy tool, it became apparent from the replies that the experiences of many cities, due to the process still being in its early stages, have remained at the level of first impressions. The LA 21 process has proved to be a long and laborious one. Turku, for instance, summarised its experiences as follows: *"In the political steering group the expectations were quite high that the programme will stimulate new way of thinking and acting. Everybody recognises that we are running a marathon, we are not sprinters when we are dealing with LA 21 work!"*

Below we discuss firstly the favourable experiences of the cities with the LA 21 process, and then the problems and difficulties highlighted by the cities.

3.1 Success and innovations

Despite LA 21 having been regarded as a difficult and time consuming process, it has, however, been a useful exercise in learning to improve citizens' and other stakeholders involvement and consultation processes and it could play a significant role in enhancing coherence within the administration. *For instance, Stockholm has adopted the "round table discussions with representatives from different sectors" approach used in the LA 21 process in other preparatory work, and considers this one very interesting outcome of LA 21 work.* Also Munich concluded the following in the City's project report: *"In order to find sustainable answers to future development questions we not only have to design projects but also have to change our ways of institutional and personal interaction. The LA 21 process may serve as a pilot example for the required reform of public management structures and action patterns."*

According to replies received from other cities, the strong points of LA 21 are connected with citizen involvement:

“LA 21 is very useful in helping people from a range of different organisations, sectors and viewpoints to discuss a common theme and develop action plans accordingly.” (Nottingham)

“LA 21 is a very useful policy tool for stimulating and mobilising citizens and NGOs to take initiatives in matters they think are important.” (Eindhoven)

“It is acting as a useful tool for citizen's participation as well as for public information and awareness raising. We are estimating as much the importance of the process as the final result.” (Barcelona)

“Difficult, time consuming tool for policy making, though fascinating and fundamental in terms of participatory approach. We have to keep working on it and with it. The concertive approach requires time and patience, but delivers very important information and remarks about the local development of the urban environment.” (Venice)

“LA 21 is a very good tool for giving power to the citizens. The process could really empower the people. It offers great hope for the future, but at the same time it demands a lot from city administrators. We have to develop a more sensitive ear!” (Stockholm)

“It has acted as a link between NGOs and the city management system, has promoted awareness, co-operation and discussions, but also caused conflicts between different interest groups.” (Tampere)

“LA 21 has a democratic legitimacy, which is important.” (Oslo)

In many LA 21 studies, as also in this questionnaire, it has become apparent as one result of the agenda that citizen involvement is an excellent innovation. Highly significant from the experiences reported, and a more important consequence from the perspective of satisfying sustainable development criteria, is that the agenda work has provoked discussion and action. The programme “between the covers” is not in itself important, rather it is the impact of the work on the administration and, over the long term, on the citizens’ daily life, that is of significance. The LA 21 process has been more important to the cities in regard to its content than sustainable development has. (See also Häikiö p. 95). It is important to identify the bottle necks which prevent the process and its aims from progressing.

Integrated approach

Swedish cities in particular have had favourable experiences with taking LA 21 and sustainable development issues into account in city policies and plans. These cities also have the use of an EMAS system, which has promoted progress with the agenda.

“The way that Gothenburg has chosen – policies in the spirit of Agenda 21 and with the idea that the city districts, the departments and the city owned companies should be responsible for the LA 21 work in their sector - has been successful so far.”

“Most of the central Agenda 21 work is done within the project on sustainable indicators. This is very strategic work involving a lot of sectors. We thought it would be a very good tool to bring together the different dimensions in sustainable development. We are also using the Agenda 21 way of seeing things now that we are producing the new environmental programme for Stockholm for 2002-2006. Things are running very well.” (Stockholm)

Favourable development has also taken place elsewhere, albeit under different names:

“Agenda 21 is wonderfully alive and buoyant, but not under the name of Agenda 21. We have succeeded beyond our wildest dreams of embedding the principles of Agenda 21 into the workings of the city. It has been done because the politicians have been told to do it by businesses and by the community. Communities are now setting the agenda for change but under the self contained headings of waste, jobs, development, social inclusion, housing, transport. The politicians are not prepared to take a crosscutting theme and relinquish power.” (Newcastle)

In many cities, the integration process is either only just being formulated, or it is at least incomplete. For example, Copenhagen decided in 1999 to establish a Council for Sustainable development. The main task of the new Council is to prepare targets for sustainable development in Copenhagen. The results of the preparation work will be published at the conference in April 2001.

Distribution and dissemination of best practices is required. It has been said that cities are generally bad and unimaginative in telling the story of their development. Visibility strategies would be effective in winning support for the broad lifestyle changes that sustainable urban development will require. (Innovative and Sustainable European Cities report)

“LA 21 will play a fundamental role in promoting SD themes and informing citizens about the strategic planning agenda of the municipality. Hence, LA 21 will be a way of communicating, in an active way with all the actors who at local level play a crucial role in promoting SD as such.”

3.2 Problems and challenges

As the positive side to the LA 21 it was underscored that LA 21 promotes the emergence of a new kind of administrative culture and an increase in dialogue between the administration and the citizens. Similarly, many replies mentioned the negative side, i.e. the problems they faced with making people (elective members and officers) change their way of thinking and working. This matter was raised by both those still in the initial stages of the process (e.g. Lyon) and those that had progressed much farther (e.g. Helsinki).

According to Utrecht's experience, *“There is a communication problem between various stakeholders. There is misunderstanding and also mistrust between stakeholders. The role of stakeholders is not clear. Sometimes they act as facilitators, sometimes as decision makers, sometimes as partners. Politicians and officers are not used to a counselling role.”*

The cornerstone of participatory activity among citizens is their genuine opportunity to be heard and to influence decision-making. Citizens are rarely able to play the role of decision-makers in the administration.

Also one problem that has been encountered in citizen participation is that the really long term sustainability goals (reduction/halving of CO₂ emissions, reductions in consumption and wastage)

are not particularly prominent among the objectives set by large citizens' organisations or groups. Ecoteams and their equivalent are still just the hobby of an extremely small minority.

Environmental emphasis

Other problems the cities brought up often related to the implementation of LA 21. Some are due to the fact that it is often the local environment administration which has been an active initiator and which is co-ordinating the LA 21 process (See also e.g. Joas (ed.) 2000, p. 125). This often leads to ecologically emphasised projects, which some of the respondents did not consider to be enough:

"Based on environmental protection the LA 21 is perceived as purely environmental and weak. A clear management framework could ensure that the balance between environmental, social and economic development is not overlooked." (Sheffield)

"It is necessary to focus not only on pure environment but we must extend the issues to socio-economic features and aspects concerned with the quality of life. That way more sectors and departments will also be involved." (Bologna)

"Special attention has to be devoted to the fact that sustainability is not just environmental care but also a question of social justice and economic efficiency." (Munich)

Correlation with other administration

Other problems concerning the implementation were, as stated in chapter 2.3.2, the difficulty in knitting the LA 21 activity together with a strategic or corporate management and planning framework. For example, Rotterdam stated that although the LA 21 project was and is successful, the problem is to get all the initiatives organised.

"The LA 21 process in Sheffield evolved from the environmental sector and the Environmental Protection Service. This led to a perception that the LA 21 was all about the environment and departmentalised the concept to an environmental project. The rest of local authority activity for improving the quality of life was not labelled as part of the LA 21 programme. It is difficult in an authority the size of Sheffield to co-ordinate all activity for LA 21 – reducing inequalities, economic development, promoting the rights of children, young people, involving business, education and awareness, community visioning. Therefore, the LA 21 has tended to pick up the local/global environmental issues, pollution, the prudent use of natural resources, environmental protection, which would otherwise not be addressed by the authority yet are nonetheless critical issues for the sustainable development of Sheffield and to the global Agenda 21 programme. However, within the City Council, the LA 21 process has engaged other departments in the eco-management and audit of their service." (Sheffield)

"Our LA 21 is not superior to the budget; its realisation is dependant upon being followed up by the budgets/economy plans, and by the plans of the different agencies. The politicians use LA 21 more as a political vision than as a practical action plan. Our system of several LA 21 documents/plans is difficult for some to comprehend. It is difficult to make all sectors of the city aware of the LA 21 and to take an active part in following up." (Oslo)

"LA 21 is not a legal document, so we rely on goodwill to achieve action."

It has also taken a long time to make LA 21 popular but, according to the replies, there still seems to be no evidence of its effectiveness as a policy tool.

“An Environmental Forum four times a year to allow public debate on different issues. These are supposed to influence policy but there's little evidence of that.” (Birmingham)

Commitment

In Vienna, the experiences have been very positive at the district level, but the politicians at the city level are still not convinced that it could be a good policy tool.

Commitment by a large administration and decision-making mechanism to a non-statutory and new system is a challenging task. However, the answers from the standpoint of attitudes are similar to those in general received in association with the 1998 study on Finnish municipalities. According to this Finnish study, the bottle neck in implementation at the attitude level was found to be a general hardening of environmental attitudes and the weak commitment of decision-makers to the principles of sustainable development. The latter became apparent from the replies to this questionnaire.

On the other hand, the problems - the poor economic state of a municipality, the lack of manpower, the passivity of local inhabitants - brought to light by the Finnish study were not referred to here (Sairinen et.al. 1999, p. 202.).

4. Future prospects for LA 21 work in the cities

In a publication on the future of Finland's environment policy it has been stated that Local Agenda 21 has not been “an ephemeral butterfly in international policy” but it has become the main environmental management tool at the municipal level. As a tool it can be compared to the ISO 14001 environmental management system in use in the business world (Sairinen et al. 1999, p. 201). From the standpoint of the experiences of Eurocities, it is not possible to draw this kind of conclusion, at least in respect of those cities in which the LA 21 process has been underway for several years. Rather, it would appear that in place of, or alongside, LA 21 the cities' own EMAS or other environmental auditing systems are being developed, or the principles of sustainable development are being integrated with the city's general strategic planning or with various projects. Judging by the replies it may be concluded that LA 21 activities “in their original form” would seem to be more appropriate to the inhabitants' own neighbourhood projects and involvement.

” The previous administration took a commitment to prepare a national strategy which they termed 'sustainable development' rather than 'LA 21'. LA 21 literature from the government has focused more on individual responsibilities, the 'Are you doing your bit?' campaign. Sustainable development literature in recent years has tended to focus more on local authority leadership, policy and modernisation, thus mainstreaming the LA 21 process within the local government.” (Sheffield)

Towards sustainable development strategies

Strategic planning and its development has recently once again become a topical issue in Europe's large cities. For instance, in Helsinki since 1997 there has existed a common strategy system governing activities in which sustainable development has been one of the city's nine common

strategies. The purpose of the nine strategies is to increase the common responsibility of the city administration and to indicate the city concern's common modes of action for the most important challenges. In the UK, a Community Strategies reform has recently taken place (see www.wastewaters.detr.gov.uk for further details).

Many European metropolises are committed to a strategic approach. The situation is also described in the final report of the Development Strategies in Major European Cities project. There is a move from the traditional conception of planning – territory-led and established by the authorities - to strategy and a project-led dynamics of global, integrated development. Initially conceived in sectoral terms, public action now has to fit in with the complexity of contemporary society. Large-scale communication, citizen involvement and participation of various social groups are basic elements of the new approach to planning (Development Strategies... 2000).

How is ecological sustainability viewed in this new planning culture of cities? According to the final report referred to above, the problematics of "sustainable development" seek to include such varied and complex aims as economic growth, social integration, quality of life and respect for the environment. Improvement of the environment represents not only an end in itself but also a service rendered to society (better quality of life for residents) and to the economy (attractiveness of the city or metropolitan area). The environmental challenges are traffic increase, increasing space consumption by housing, and governance of the metropolitan area. (Development Strategies... 2000, 18–19). Thus, sustainable development strategy combines environmental aims with the quality of life, social cohesion and economic development.

In the type of strategic planning described above environmental issues are seen as local traffic and land use questions. Many environmental questions are at the same time both local and general (Sairinen et al. 1999, p. 197). To really be able to talk about a sustainable development strategy, it is necessary, in addition to other dimensions, to concentrate on the central issues from the ecological sustainability perspective, i.e. the sustainable use of natural resources, bringing climate change under control, and the conservation of biodiversity. A sustainable development strategy should be based on the global viewpoint. In this respect, as also in the time span of its follow-up, it differs radically from the planning models constructed so far. For example, in Helsinki the time perspective of the coming LA 21 action plan is 40 years, whereas in terms of the development of the land use master plan and the traffic plan for the capital it is 20 years, while the economic plan, which has to be examined annually, applies to the following three years only.

Environmental protection has been and is still seen as a highly technical matter that should be handled only by professionals on all levels of society (Joas (ed.) 2000, p. 97). It will be interesting to see whether the LA 21 activities have paved the way towards taking ecological sustainability into account in strategic planning in the cities. Grounds have been laid for this in the environmental sector, to which it continues to provide a formidable challenge in the sense of making expert data comprehensible and applying it in practical decision-making. Horizontal and vertical cooperation is in a key position here, as is also the business of making a choice between the decision-making procedures. Recent debate on international climate change provides an excellent example of this kind of well-entrenched method of tackling issues.

EC cities in various parts of Europe are at a different stage in respect of the implementation of LA 21. In many of the cities the LA 21 is still in its initial phase. In those cities in which a start was made on the process in the early 1990s, LA 21 activities have become part of the city's other governance, or the next steps are being debated. According to the researcher, it seems as if the idea of sustainability is standing at a cross-roads (Joas (ed.) 2000, p. 140). The real problem could well

lie in the term “Local Agenda 21” continuing to be unfamiliar to many people. At the beginning of 2001, the autonomous LA 21 project in Helsinki drew to a close, while Stockholm’s LA 21 office in the central administration was closed down, although the development work towards deepening integration and maintaining the quality of citizens’ life continues. In the future, the indicators will reveal in what direction development has gone in each of the two cities. However, credibility and better comparability call for the establishment of conceptually common principles.

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