

Conference „How to promote commitment for sustainability?“ of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Brandenburg on 24.10.2006 in Potsdam (House of Nature)

Active Cities using the example of Lüneburg Contributor: Reinhart Günzel

First, I would like to refer briefly about myself. I was born in Stollberg in the Erz Mountains in 1935. In Stendal in the Altmark, i.e. in the GDR, I grew up, went to school and graduated vocational training as a gardener. I studied landscape management in Hanover and then I worked in the administration of Hamburg as a landscape architect for 30 years. Alongside I worked in manifold voluntary capacities in the environment and development cooperation spheres - mainly as a member of the BUND (German branch of Friends of the Earth).

The Heinrich Böll House Lüneburg

It does not have a direct relation to the Heinrich Böll Foundation. We asked the Böll family if we could use their name. The Heinrich Böll House was established in 1991 with the objective of creating a common centre for initiatives working in the fields of environment and development in Lüneburg. For the purpose of the establishment and the sponsorship of the Heinrich Böll House the non-profit association “Our world - for peace, environment, justice” was created. Work at the Heinrich Böll House started with seven groups, each of which had an office in the house. These were:

1. BUND – district group Lüneburg.
2. Project “A ship for the Elbe river”
3. One-world store and eco-store
4. Organic restaurant.
5. terre des homes – working group Lüneburg
6. Neuland - society for species-appropriate and environmentally sound livestock husbandry
7. Lüneburg initiative against nuclear plants (LigaA).

In addition, in the Heinrich Böll House the association “Sonnenkorb” met with a partner project from India, and the initiative “Parents and Physicians against nuclear energy” which was created as a consequence of the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986. The number of activities and events of citizens’ groups in Lüneburg during the past 15 years is immense. I would like to talk briefly about three of these events:

In April 1991, during a European conference, the city of Lüneburg signed up for membership in a climate alliance – the Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest People. Impetus had been given by the Heinrich Böll House. On the occasion of a celebratory event for the Böll House’s 10th anniversary, Prof. Dr. Dorothee Sölle gave a lecture with the topic “Human rights devourer – we need a globalisation from the bottom up”, a topic once again coming to force at the moment.

In December 2005 the team from Heinrich Böll House obtained the One-World-Award of the Churches’ Development Service of the Protestant Church in Lower

Saxony for two exhibitions in the Lüneburg water tower – “Earth, Jungle, Man” with more than 10 000 visitors, and “Noah’s ark 2004” with 14 000 visitors.

Strategy for sustainability

In a strategy for long-lasting sustainable development, all social groupings must be included. Only that way effective integration of the ecological, social and economical dimensions can be achieved. Awareness of cooperation on all levels, from global to local, must be developed. Sustainability must be understood as integral. In times of the more and more accentuated globalisation, the cross-linkage of fields of activity will be more and more different and stringent. Here I want to refer only to the activity field of climate and its links e.g. to the fields of water, poverty, consumption and production etc. The pressure from the citizens’ groups on all levels must be taken up more deliberately and positively. Rio and Johannesburg would not have been possible without the work of the citizens’ groups. Astrid Klug, parliamentary state secretary, recently stated on behalf of the Federal Department of the Environment: “Only in active cooperation between the EU, federation and federal states and particularly the local authorities, we can attain the appointed environment goals and meet our obligations to the citizens for a high-quality environment and life!” Yes, we can only hope.

About the Lüneburg Council for Sustainability

Founded in 2005 by the BUND, the constituent meeting took place in the city hall. The mayor Ulrich Mädge wished for the council “to critically and constructively accompany the work of the city in terms of sustainability”. The development of fields of action in the areas of economy, ecology and social policy and the creation of a mission statement for Lüneburg were mentioned as priorities.

For appointing the Council for Sustainability no politicians or leading officials should be selected as far as possible. We would prefer professional skills and significance acquired in an organisation’s leading position, for example. In this way we hope to give our statements adequate importance to be accepted and implemented by the city council in particular, but also by business associations. It has to be noted that the Council for Sustainability does not meet in public and always in the city hall. Here I list the eight members of the Council for Sustainability in Lüneburg:

- Dr. Heiderose Manz-Keinke, who for many years successfully managed the Agenda office of the city of Lüneburg. The office has been closed since, however. Ms. Manz-Keinke established a company – the Kilmawerk energy agency - in the meantime, that mainly deals with consultancy of regional companies on energy issues.
- Pastor Folket Thamm, pastor of the Nikolai Church, advowson church of the town. For many years he was chairperson of the environmental committee of the synod of the Evangelic Regional Church Hanover. He dealt with environmental and developmental issues on different levels.
- Dr. Angela Franz-Bahlsen from the Institute for Environmental and Sustainability Communication of the Lüneburg University works in the project “Sustainable University” under the direction of Professor Michelsen and leads the subproject “Communication, Participation and Knowledge Transfer”.

- Prof. Dr. Thomas Schomerus holds a chair for public law, particularly energy and environmental law at the university
- Brigitte Kaminski from the Local Alliance for Families Lüneburg, is head of the coordination point “Woman and Economy” in Lüneburg. The Prime Minister of Lower Saxony recently visited this coordination point which is sponsored by the EU and the state at 75%
- Eberhard Manzke, president of the Employers’ Association Lüneburg – Lower Saxony Northeast. Mr. Manzke entered the Lüneburg city council for the CDE after local elections on September 10. We, the Council for Sustainability payed attention to this fact. It was agreed on all sides to make an exception from the rule that no politician should participate in the Council for Sustainability, because of his multifaceted commitments. Moreover, he is under discussion as the new president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Lüneburg-Wolfsburg
- Presently Prof. Schaltegger enters the Council. He was elected Vice-President of the University of Lüneburg’s Presidential Board before the start of the new semester.
- Joachim Zießler from the executive team of the Lüneburg’s local press (LZ) was admitted to the Council providing good opportunities for our public relations

How to promote the commitment for sustainability? This is a question we always have to face, the Council for Sustainability always has to face. Perhaps Lüneburg is in quite an advantageous position. With 70 000 inhabitants the town is still rather manageable and contacts to the political level are relatively easy to establish. An important aim of the Council for Sustainability is the establishment of close relations between the town and the university. The university has 10 000 people. The most recently elected Presidential Board with young representatives – especially 37 years old President Spoun from Switzerland – seems to offer good qualifications for it. Thus, for the first time, the beginning of the new semester was celebrated in town, in the Johannes church, instead of on the campus.

In order to establish a meaningful connection between the Council for Sustainability and the town’s political level, the City Council, we organized informal meetings with each of the four parliamentary parties. Here, our university representatives expressed an interesting goal – we want to obtain a project “Exemplary Sustainable Commune Lüneburg”.

Fields of action

I would like to talk about three fields of action for Lüneburg.

- Energy
- Consumption and production: The Sustainable Shopping Basket
- UN Decade 2005-2014 – Education for Sustainable Development

About energy: As a result of the discussion for sustainability in the town, the city council provided a draft resolution containing useful approaches regarding renewable energy, in particular solar energy. The Green Party presented an extended draft. In that context, there were also a lot of ideas from the citizens. Thus, among others an association for solar energy was formed, with different individual actions concerning

the realisation of solar roofs. Along with the member of the Council for Sustainability Dr. Manz-Keinke a local or regional energy agency was founded, “Klimawerk”. All these approaches have to be integrated to allow an effective implementation. For the field of action consumption and production there is the project “The Sustainable Shopping Basket” which will be developed and processed by Marion Rolle from the Heinrich Böll House. Increasingly interesting connections were established as with the Hamburg metropolitan area.

UN Decade – Education for Sustainable Development. This field of action offers a lot of good opportunities for Lüneburg. We already have two UNESCO project schools. A lot of information is also disseminated by the Böll House. As mentioned before, there are many activities in this regard at the university. Prof. Michelsen participated in a working group that designed the corresponding action plan for the German government. I have already agreed with three persons actively working in this field to discuss the Council’s further steps and to develop further goals. These three persons are Horst Bollen – coordinator of the UNESCO project school Raabe School –, Heinz-Jürgen Rickert – state coordinator for UNESCO projects who happens to live in Lüneburg – and Marco Rieckmann.

At this point, another interesting project that we plan should be mentioned. A survey on sustainability was carried out at the university, for the university people, with the result that 90% voted on it favourably. We want to organize the same survey for the people Lüneburg. This will surely yield a much lower percentage, maybe 15%. If so, we would want to discuss this sustainability problem in public, using our connections to the local press.

Furthermore, a university sustainability report is currently being prepared by the university, lobbied by Vice president and Council member Prof. Schaltegger in particular. For adjustment, about 15 people from the university and the town respectively, were recently invited to a dialogue. A second dialogue will be held in brief.

There is a very active group at the university, which operates as an umbrella association for the students’ initiatives in Lüneburg (DSI). Together with several students’ initiatives and in cooperation with the University of Münster, this umbrella association arranges an impressive symposium “Unity in diversity: a sustainable world is possible” from 17 to 19 November 2006. The list of contributors contains a multitude of impressive personalities. This symposium is the prelude of a series of events in other German universities, where the students’ visions on globalisation and sustainability issues comes into focus especially in relation with the G8 summit in summer 2007. This DSI symposium is an official contribution to the UN-Decade “Education for Sustainable Development”.

Now I will refer to the pilote project “NAX Sustainability Index”, in which the city of Lüneburg is involved. It is organised by InWEnt (Service Agency – Communities in One World) and the KGSt (local government association) and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation. In the first phase, 20 indicators for relevant fields of action were specified. For further development representatives from 20 communities will meet in Hanover on November 6. The Böll House organized

that the city of Lüneburg will participate. I will take part together with the city hall's heads of the departments.

Inspired by the Council for Sustainable Development the Federal Government originated in 2005 the promotional competition "Citizens initiate Sustainability" (BIN) which was. The Heinrich Böll House took part in it. On the 10 - 11 October 2006 a memorandum event "Citizens initiate Sustainability - a long-lasting contribution to the National Strategy for Sustainability" took place in Berlin. We intend to apply with a project "Council for Sustainability Lüneburg", in case a third stage will be financed.

Last but not least something more about the Hamburg metropolitan area, which gains more and more importance for Lüneburg. In Hamburg there has been a so called Future Council since 1996. Recently it was opened for the first time for institutions outside Hamburg, but within the metropolitan area. The Heinrich Böll House became the first member outside Hamburg. I was called in the coordinating committee, being a former resident of Hamburg. In a recent conference on sustainability, which took place in the Hamburg city hall, we, the members of the Future Council, initiated a debate about a strategy for sustainability and now we will come together with representatives of the Senate.