

Panel 6.2**Local governance towards a green society:
How can cities act in a multilevel world?**

Chair: Jørgen Lund Madsen (ICLEI)
Rapporteur: Hanna Scheck (WI)
Speakers: Jørgen Lund Madsen (City of Copenhagen/ICLEI)
 Astrid Hoffman-Kallen (City of Hannover)
 Jacques Theys (MEEDDM)

Overview

Cities play a crucial role in transitions to low-carbon societies. Two important elements shared by cities make them major players in shaping such transitions: First, they are very close to the citizens and they know best the economic, demographic and infrastructural conditions. Second, cities are in the end responsible for planning in key elements of LCS (traffic, urban planning, waste etc.). These important features enable them to develop appropriate policies and measures in order to realize effective and efficient transitions to LCS.

The importance of cities has also been shown during Cop 15 in Copenhagen. Even if the conference did not lead to substantial results in terms of how to continue the international climate policy process, it can be seen as a big success from the viewpoint of cities: The mayors were able to put pressure on governments. One important outcome was the creation of a “Cities Climate Catalogue”, an electronic catalogue containing targets and measures fed in by cities themselves. This example shows that cities are actually acting even if they are not considered as a strong partner everywhere.

Nevertheless, the responsibilities and the role and power of cities in shaping transitions to LCS largely diverge in terms of freedom to act (e.g. a city like Copenhagen with 50 000 employees has another standing vis à vis its citizens and local businesses).

Major findings

Two speakers gave an overview of their cities’ activities in the field of climate policy.

Astrid Hoffmann-Kallen, City of Hannover, Germany

The goal of the city is a 40%-reduction of CO₂-emissions until 2020 beyond 1990-levels. In order to reach this target, the city of Hannover has developed different instruments: there exists a climate protection unit in the city’s administration, the city holds a majority share of the municipal power supplier, a climate protection fund as well as a regional climate protection agency has been set up.

The most important governance instrument in order to reach the target of a 40x%-reduction in 2020 is the so called project “Hannover Climate Alliance 2020”: The alliance involves about 80 stakeholders working together within 4 working groups (Industry, Office Buildings, Housing and Disseminators). The tasks of these working groups are the identification of aims and actions as well the analysis of major obstacles. The working groups’ consultations resulted in a policy programme focusing on four central action fields

- demand side reductions
- supply-side reductions through ‘enercity’
- the City Administration Programme

- the increase of the share of renewable energy (target of 20% of the regions electricity demand to be covered by REGs)

Jørgen Lund Madsen, City of Copenhagen, Denmark

The goal of the city of Copenhagen is a CO₂-emission reduction of 15% between 2002 and 2015. In order to reach this target, the local government set up the Copenhagen Climate Plan encompassing six fields of action (energy, transport, buildings, citizens and sustainable urban development, adaptation to future climate change).

Important features and political messages of this Climate Plan are:

- dynamics
- integration and Synergies
- the role of partnerships

Main issues discussed

Influence of cities as interest groups on the national and international levels

- There was wide agreement on the fact that the role of cities is very important in order to mainstream climate policy on the national level through their proactive role – especially in developing countries. The influence is carried out by the parliamentary representatives on the one hand and through city networks lobbying at the national and international level on the other hand
- There exist many organisations representing cities on the international level. But with this multitude of different organisations representing the municipal level, cities run the risk of an over-representation which in the end can lead to inefficient representation of interests. There was the suggestion of strengthening cooperation and coordination between the different organisations in order to prevent inefficiencies and incoherencies.

The role of strategic development departments in the municipal administration is crucial

- As climate change is a highly cross-sectoral issue, there are many departments involved in carrying out municipal climate policy measures. Nevertheless, the financial department seems to be the most important actor finally giving its consent for goal-oriented expenditures realising effective policies and measures.

Energy Policy

- Energy policy is one of the major levers of cities to cut emissions down. But stronger cooperation between cities and energy utilities is necessary in order to get support for climate protection plans in the city and from the citizens and to transform energy systems in a sustainable manner. This is of special importance in Germany, where several cities own their own utilities and seem to be the major actors in shaping the ways towards a sustainable energy future.

Does climate policy change the characteristics of “the urban”?

- Climate protection measures are often visible and change the “image” of a city (e.g. bicycle tracks, trees, energy efficient housings etc.). These visible results play an important role in creating acceptance at the citizen level on the one hand. On the other hand, accepted pilot projects finally might lead to more profound, long-term structural changes.

Problem of inventories/measurement

- There are many differences on the methodologies used by local governments in order to measure their

emissions. The calculation of emissions needs stronger support in terms of overcoming technical and organisational challenges (see also 4. below).

Which factors contribute most to cities taking action on climate change issues

- One important factor is pressure on decision makers through citizens, (green) parties and interest groups. In Hannover, especially, students put much pressure on the local government.
- The departments within the city administration also play an important role in triggering climate change measures.
- Nevertheless, decision makers themselves finally play the most important role since it is them to make decisions about measures to be taken.

Items and ideas for future research questions

Science plays a crucial role for cities in the field of transitions to LCS. There are four major fields in which scientific support will be needed in future:

- research on the measuring of emissions
- research on the development of integrated, intelligent energy and traffic systems
- research on concrete technologies
- research on how to create participatory environments in order to make the involvement of citizens and other stakeholders more efficient

The major challenge of local governments to refer to scientific advice is a financial one. Most cities lack the financial means to hire scientific expertise. They therefore most often ask for consultant help in producing most often short-term-useful measures rather than developing long-term strategies.

Policy relevant questions

Three major policy relevant questions were raised during the discussion, referring to how local governments will be able to deal with inherent problems of climate policy:

- Is there enough certainty on the local level in order to conduct a robust municipal climate policy? How can cities deal with uncertainties?
- The involvement of partners on the local level is crucial (e.g. in terms of binding commitments with local businesses). But how local governments can share the local responsibilities and duties in connection with climate policy? How could cities organise reasonable and conductible burden sharing mechanisms on the local level?
- How local governments can convince their citizens of the need for long-term structural changes?
- While Loorbach claims that it takes a year to develop common understanding for a transition to occur, policy makers nonetheless are often working on an even shorter time horizon. How do we reconcile long-term visions with short-term political needs?