

The Role of Cities in Global Climate Governance

The Case of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of cities in climate governance. Its starting point is the popular narrative according to which cities are leading national governments in the fight against climate change, challenging their authority and disrupting the political order. This narrative is named the strong cities in climate governance argument. Cities in the US currently behave according to the narrative. It is assumed that if cities all around the world would follow the example of US cities, this would lead to massive disruptions in global climate governance.

The thesis investigates the role of the three biggest German cities, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, in global climate governance in order to find out if they follow the example of US cities or if they show a different behaviour. The investigation is based on interviews with city representatives working on the topic of climate change.

It is found that the three German cities show a different behaviour than the US cities and than the strong cities in climate governance argument assumes. While the US cities are in opposition to their national government (acting as challenger cities), the German cities cooperate with their national government (acting as facilitator cities). Still, cities in both countries are active on the international stage, a space that is traditionally reserved for nation-states. This adds additional complexity and uncertainty to the study of global climate governance and highlights the importance of additional research in this field.

Keywords: cities, global climate governance, multi-level governance, international relations

Executive Summary

Purpose

This thesis investigates the role of cities in global climate governance. It takes a narrative as starting point that recently gained prominence in academia, media and amongst policy-makers: while nation-states are struggling to introduce ambitious climate action, cities are “leading national governments” (Park Won-soon in Worland, 2015) and are the driving force in the fight against climate change. This is labelled the *strong cities in climate governance argument* and a working definition is established according to which 1) cities lead national governments in the fight against climate change by having more ambitious policies in place than their national government, 2) cities challenge the authority of nation-states and disrupt the political order by taking on a more important role in global politics, and 3) cities act without support from or even despite opposition by the national government.

Cities in the United States (US) that are opposing President Trump’s anti-climate course are the prime example of cities that behave according to the narrative. They challenge the authority of their national government both domestically by introducing ambitious climate action as well as on the international stage where they seek recognition directly by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This disrupts the established political order as it is traditionally the national government that sets a country’s course on a given political issue and that is the only actor representing a country in international negotiations. It is assumed that in case cities all around the world follow the example of US cities, this would massively disrupt the global climate governance system, which highlights the importance of investigating the role of cities in global climate governance.

Approach

This thesis investigates the role of the three biggest German cities, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, in global climate governance in order to find out if they follow the example of US cities and the strong cities in climate governance argument or if they show a different behaviour. The investigation is based on interviews with city representatives working on the topic of climate change. Two research questions were formulated.

RQ1: How do the climate staff of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich understand the role of their respective city in global climate governance?

RQ2: What can we learn from the insights on the three biggest German cities with regard to the overarching strong cities in climate governance argument?

Due to a lack of reference points and hypotheses that can be tested, an explorative case study approach is adopted whose aim it is to explore the topic and to generate hypotheses that can be tested in follow-up studies.

The investigation is guided by an analytical framework that was constructed based on a review of relevant academic literature (the work of Marks et al., 1996; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Bulkeley, 2010; Kern & Mol, 2013; and Bulkeley et al., 2015 had a major influence on the establishment of the analytical framework). The framework places cities in a multi-level governance playing field in which they find themselves below the international as well as the national level along the vertical axis and next to other cities and city networks along the horizontal axis. The framework provides certain ‘boxes’ that allow a categorisation of city engagement. Externally, they can engage in hierarchical governance (top-down, implementing

policies negotiated at a higher level), in vertical governance (bottom-up, influencing actors on higher levels) and in horizontal governance (working with other cities and city networks). Internally, they can introduce ambitious climate policies, they can foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and can encourage public participation and they can be sites for experimentation and policy incubation.

Findings and conclusions

It was found that while the representatives emphasised different aspects of their respective city's role in global climate governance, all three cities showed a core of similar positions. These were labelled 'the case of German cities' and were then compared to 'the case of US cities' and the strong cities in climate governance argument.

In the US case, the national government and the cities do not share the same goal. While the national government announced to withdraw the country from the Paris Agreement, the cities declared that they are still committed to reaching the goals of the agreement. The cities went into strong opposition to the government, challenging its authority both domestically by introducing ambitious climate policies as well as on the international stage where they claim to represent the US at the UNFCCC negotiations.

In the German case, both the national government and the cities are committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement. The cities work with the national government in a cooperational manner to achieve emissions reductions domestically. Their climate policies are about equal in ambition. The cities are active on the international stage in parallel to the national government but state that they do not intend to challenge its authority. They see their role on the international stage as input givers to the negotiations of nation-states.

The case of German cities thus does not match the case of US cities and does not match the strong cities in climate governance argument. The thesis introduces the terms *challenger cities* (describing the behaviour of the US cities) and *facilitator cities* (describing the behaviour of the German cities) in an attempt to develop a terminology for city behaviour in global climate governance.

Even though the behaviour of the German cities under investigation differs from the behaviour of US cities and the strong cities in climate governance argument, it supports the argument according to which global climate governance has shifted away from purely multilateral governance arrangements to a system, in which a larger number of actors is trying to exert influence on the international stage. This introduces additional complexity and uncertainty to the study of global climate governance.

Figure 1 illustrates the traditional notion of multilateral climate governance in which national governments are the only actors representing their countries on the international stage.

Figure 2 illustrates a more complex and less predictable climate governance system according to the findings of this thesis. Country A shows a 'traditional country' in which only the national government is active on the international stage. Country B shows the behavior of the US challenger cities that compete with their national government to represent the country on the international stage. Country C shows the behavior of the German facilitator cities that are active as input givers on the international stage in parallel to the national government but that do not have the intention to undermine the authority of the national government.

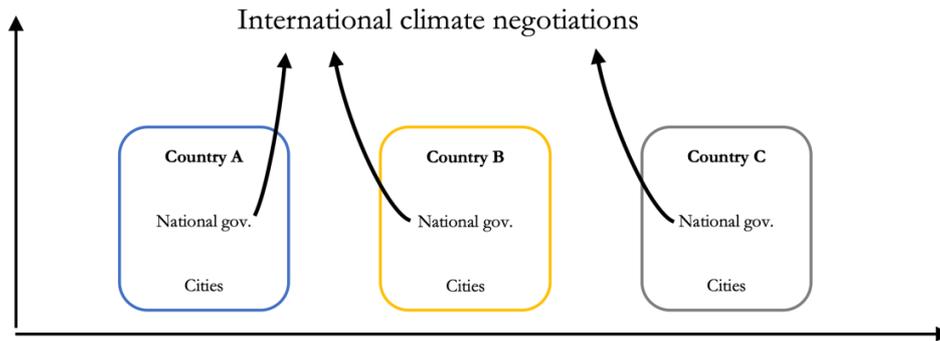


Figure 1: Traditional notion of climate governance. Source: own elaboration

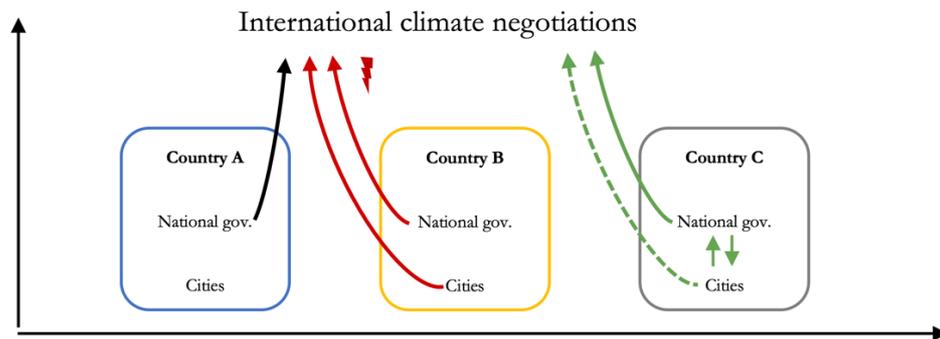


Figure 2: Additional complexity for global climate governance. Source: own elaboration

The strong cities in climate governance argument was found to portrait cities in a very narrow way that matches the behaviour of challenger cities but that does not capture the reality of facilitator cities.

Recommendations and hypotheses for future research

This thesis gathered empirical evidence from three German cities to help create a picture of current city behaviour in global climate governance. Additional research is needed to create a more comprehensive picture.

This thesis established the terms *strong cities in climate governance argument*, *challenger cities* and *facilitator cities* that can serve as points of reference for future studies. In addition, the following three hypotheses were formulated based on the data generated in the interviews and could be tested in follow-up studies:

- 1) If a city feels bound to the goals of the Paris Agreement, it is the behavior of its national government that determines whether it acts as challenger city or facilitator city.
- 2) The political culture in a country (e.g. consensus-oriented or confrontational) has an influence on whether a city acts as challenger city or as facilitator city.
- 3) Cities that have more constitutional rights to voice their opinion on higher levels of decision-making (e.g. through being a city-state) are more active in global climate governance than cities who do not have such constitutional rights.

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Abbreviations

C40	C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group
CDP	Carbon Disclosure Project
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GHG	greenhouse gas
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IIIEE	International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NAZCA	Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action
NDC	nationally determined contribution
NGO	non-governmental organisation
TMN	transnational municipal network
tCO ₂ e	tonnes CO ₂ equivalent
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States

1 Introduction

Humanity finds itself in the midst of an ‘existential crisis’: climate change (EU Council, 2019; Guterres, 2018). Human livelihoods as well as the survival of the world’s fauna and flora are at stake. Climate change is already leading to more extreme weather events such as unusually hot summers, droughts and forest fires, to extreme precipitation and floods, to ocean acidification and sea level rise and these effects are projected to increase in strength (IPCC, 2014).

In 1992, the UN established the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and since 1995, its member states have been meeting for annual Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to discuss actions on how to limit climate change. At the 21st COP in Paris in 2015, the countries of the world negotiated the Paris Agreement in which they pledged to keeping a global temperature increase this century “well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels” (UNFCCC, 2015a). The agreement does not assign greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets to countries but instead builds on voluntary contributions that are determined by every country individually, the so-called nationally determined contributions (NDCs). In theory, when added up, these NDCs should equal GHG emissions reduction big enough to limit climate change to well below 2 °C or even 1.5 °C, but humanity has a problem: current NDCs are not ambitious enough. Even if all NDCs were fully implemented, these would only limit global warming to about 3 °C by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial levels (UNEP, 2019, p. 21). This is not enough to keep humanity within a corridor that allows us to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change (IPCC, 2018).

There is thus a need to increase the level of ambitiousness in climate change mitigation around the world. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) states that limiting global warming to 1.5°C is still possible but it would require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” (UNEP, 2018, paragraph 4) and adds that if

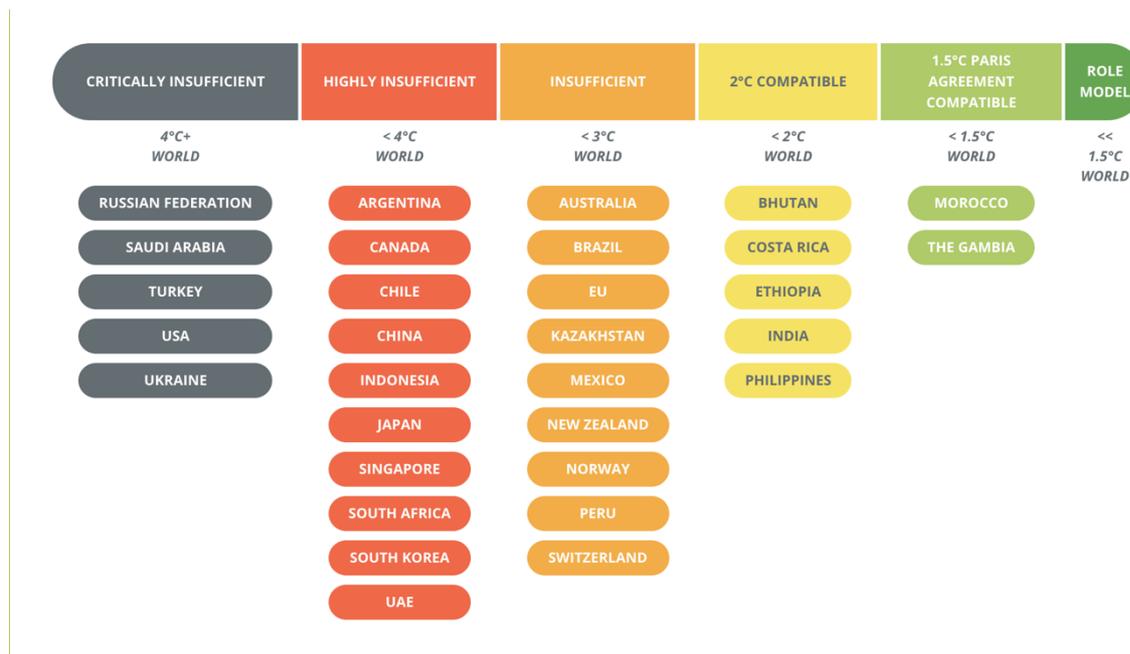
“NDC ambitions are not increased before 2030, exceeding the 1.5°C goal can no longer be avoided. Now more than ever, unprecedented and urgent action is required by all nations. The assessment of actions by the G20 countries indicates that this is yet to happen; in fact, global CO₂ emissions increased in 2017 after three years of stagnation” (UNEP, 2019, p. XIV).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear that the world has the scientific understanding, the technological capacity, and the financial means to tackle climate change (IPCC, 2018). What is lacking is the political will to implement the measures that will help us limit global warming to below 1.5 °C.

Analyses of the NDCs show that nation-states lack the political will needed (UNEP, 2019, p. 21). According to the Climate Action Tracker (2019), an independent scientific analysis produced by Climate Analytics, the New Climate Institute and Ecofys, large emitters like China, Canada and Japan are on pathways that lead to global warming of between three and four degrees, and Russia and the US are even on a trajectory that leads to more than four degrees of warming (see Table 1-1). Also, the EU, that is often seen as climate leader, is on a trajectory of two to three degrees warming. Most NDCs analysed are classified as insufficient, highly insufficient or critically insufficient.¹

¹ The Climate Action Tracker analyses the biggest emitters and a representative sample of smaller emitters covering about 80 percent of global emissions and approximately 70 percent of global population.

Table 1-1: NDC analysis



Source: Adapted from *Climate Action Tracker* (2019)

If nation-states lack the ambitiousness required, who could introduce the momentum needed to still make the story of limiting climate change a success? Some see cities as the actors that could introduce the momentum required (e.g. B. Barber, 2014; Bloomberg, 2017; C40, 2016a). Seoul’s mayor Park Won-soon stated at the COP 21 that “local governments are actually leading national governments. They are the driving force [in the global fight against climate change]” (Park Won-soon in Worland, 2015). This view is resonated by the media, for example by the BBC’s environmental correspondent Matt McGrath who states that “[c]ities lead the way on curbing carbon emissions. With many countries struggling to cut their carbon, [...] major cities are making substantial strides to stem their emissions” (McGrath, 2018).

People like Park and McGrath who argue for an increased importance of cities in climate governance have good arguments on their side. Today, more than half of the human population lives in urban areas and this might extend to three quarters by 2050 (Johnson, 2018). Cities account for about 70 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, use 80 percent of global energy supply and 75 percent of all natural resources (UN Habitat, 2011), they are central to the global economy as well as to the mobility of goods and people. Due to their sheer size and high consumption of resources – and the connected emissions – the decisions that are taken by cities have a great impact on the likelihood of humanity staying within the agreed warming limits (While & Whitehead, 2013), or to say it in the words of the President of the EU Commission: “The fight against climate change will not be won or lost in diplomatic discussions in Brussels or in Paris. It will be won or lost on the ground and in the cities where most Europeans live, work and use about 80 percent of all the energy produced in Europe” (Jean-Claude Juncker, 2015).

While cities are major drivers of climate change, they are also amongst the most vulnerable places with regard to the impacts of climate change, be it rising temperatures or more extreme and uncertain weather (While & Whitehead, 2013). The physical existence of many coastal cities and metropolitan areas is threatened by sea level rise (Nicholls, Wong, Burkett, Woodroffe, & Hay, 2008). Cities and other sub-national bodies have thus adopted a pragmatic

approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation. As they are, compared to national governments, closer to the people that can already feel the impacts of climate change, they started to act (see for example Brown in Worland, 2015).

Cities all around the world have started to organise themselves in transnational municipal networks (TMNs) to discuss and share their experiences with climate change. Prominent examples of such networks are the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). Cities have also started to take stock of their GHG emissions and to set climate targets independent of their national governments (see for example C40, 2017).

A view into the US shows what a dynamic committed cities can create. When President Trump announced his intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement in June 2017 and started to roll back climate policies that had been introduced under President Obama, he created a political vacuum in the US climate governance: the national government demonstrated that it would no longer pursue climate action. In response, a large number of sub-national bodies including cities, states, tribes, businesses and universities united under the label 'We Are Still In' and have reaffirmed their commitment to continue to support climate action to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement (Bloomberg, 2017).

What we are witnessing in the US right now is a movement of cities and other non-state actors that in absence of leadership by the national government try to take over its responsibilities. By doing so, they create a counterweight to and challenge the authority of the national government to decide on the country's course with regard to climate action. While the national government declared 'we are out', the movement declared 'we are still in'. But the movement does not settle with achieving emissions reductions alone, it also seeks to fill in the gap that the US national government has left on the international stage. Michael Bloomberg, who is a leading figure in the city movement, started paying the US share to the UN Climate Change Secretariat after the federal government stopped doing so (Cochran, 2018) and even declared that his coalition would submit a "societal NDC" (Bloomberg in Carriero, 2017) and that it wants to officially take part in UNFCCC conferences. "This coalition represents more than half of the US economy," he said. "If this group were a country, we would have the world's third largest economy. In other words, a group of citizens, states and businesses who remain committed to the Paris agreement represent a bigger economy than any country in the world, outside the US and China. We should have a seat at the table and the ability to work with our peers in other nations" (Bloomberg as cited by Neslen, 2017). This statement by a network of cities and other non-state actors openly challenges the authority of the US government in global climate governance and demands to give non-state actors more influence and a representation on the international stage.

The developments in the US are today's prime example of cities that lead their national government in climate governance but cities all around the world have started to introduce ambitious climate policies and are becoming more and more vocal about it. Prominent examples are Copenhagen that wants to become the first carbon neutral capital in the world by 2025 (City of Copenhagen, n.d.), London that aims to achieve a zero carbon transportation network by 2050 (C40, 2019) or Mexico city that announced to ban all diesel vehicles by 2025 and to promote the walking and cycling infrastructure (C40, 2016b).

Academic scholars are echoing this, for example Johnson (2018) who states that "[o]ne narrative that has generated considerable attention among scholars, activists and politicians involved in the study and practice of global climate governance is the idea that cities and city-networks are stepping in—or more appropriately—stepping up where national governments

and international organizations have failed to act” (p. 50). Some even argue that cities are better suited than nation-states to deal with complex issues such as climate change. The most prominent proponent of this idea is Benjamin Barber who introduced it in his book *If Mayors Ruled the World* (2014). He argues that local action and global cooperation among cities could lead to pragmatic solutions instead of ideology and sovereignty-driven politics. According to Acuto (2017), the more important role that city networks are claiming for themselves and the growth of city diplomacy have been disrupting the established political order. He states that cities are in many cases bypassing national governments and relating directly to international treaties and commitments.

We are witnessing cities from all around the world introducing ambitious climate policies and getting more vocal about their actions, often organising themselves in transnational municipal networks and seeking to gain influence on the international stage. Politicians, journalists and academics are putting forward the idea that cities are leading national governments in the fight against climate change. I call this *the strong cities in climate governance argument*.

1.1 Problem definition

There is undoubtedly a strong movement of cities in the US that challenges the authority of their national government. Is that movement here to stay or is it just a momentary trend and the US government will defend its authority against the movement? How does this look on a global scale? There are definitely examples of cities with ambitious climate policies in place that do not shy away from being very vocal about their actions and that try to motivate others to join them, such as Copenhagen, London and Mexico City – but is this limited to a few, shining examples or are cities all around the world indeed trying to gain more influence in global climate governance and are they leading their respective national governments in the fight against climate change? In other words: is the strong cities in climate governance argument true?

Before we think about whether the strong cities in climate governance argument is true or not, let us assume that it is and think about the implications this would have. We are used to nation-states being the predominant actors in the current climate regime that is mainly characterised by the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement and the NDCs. While the idea that the fight against climate change is only decided in intergovernmental conferences is outdated and it is widely accepted that there is a global climate governance in which a multitude of actors (including nation-states, federal states, cities, businesses, scientific actors, civil society) are working together to fight climate change, nation-states still remain the most central amongst those actors (e.g. Tavares, 2016). Nation-states are the ones that meet at the international level, they can sign international treaties, they set up the UNFCCC, they negotiated the Paris Agreement and they decide on their NDCs and report on the progress made.

If the strong cities in climate governance argument turned out to be true, the predominance of nation-states in global climate governance might come to an end. In the US, we can already observe 1) cities that introduce more ambitious climate policies than the national government, 2) cities that try to shape the country’s course with regard to climate change (‘we are out’ vs. ‘we are still in’), and 3) cities taking over functions that traditionally fell into the ‘international’ by trying to gain more influence in the UN climate negotiations or by conducting their own international relations. In short, cities in the US are challenging the predominance of the nation-state in climate governance both within the boundaries of the state but also within international relations. This in turn has the potential to make climate governance more complex and less predictable as it introduces more possibilities for how climate governance can be conducted. While states would traditionally deal with other states, states could now

decide to interact directly with cities and regions in another state, bypassing a national government that is unwilling to conduct climate action. Alternatively, city networks could conduct their own climate governance, completely independent of national actors.

In order for the fight against climate change to be a success, it is important to understand the dynamics in climate governance. It is important to look at power shifts, to check if the system in place (the climate regime) is still capable of ensuring good management and if not, the system needs to be reformed. As it holds the potential to fundamentally disrupt the traditional notion of climate governance, the question whether the strong cities in climate governance argument is true or not is thus of high relevance.

How to find an answer to the question of whether the strong cities in climate governance argument is true or not? This can best be achieved by looking at different cases around the world. The case of US cities has received a lot of attention and is part of the reason why the narrative of strong cities has emerged. It is now necessary to look at other cases in order to understand if cities all around are indeed leading their respective governments and are challenging their authority in climate governance or if this is not the case. While there is a rich body of academic literature on the topics of climate governance and urban governance in general, there is little literature that helps answer this specific question.

There is literature on global climate governance from an international relations perspective (e.g. Bodansky, 2016; Ellerman, Convery, & de Perthuis, 2010; Grubb, 2016). This branch of research mostly focuses on the actions of nation-states and does not provide much insight on city behaviour. Early research on urban climate governance dates back to the mid-1990s, taking an internal perspective by focusing on governance within the city, for example municipal projects to achieve GHG emissions reductions (Bulkeley, 2010). More recent research started focusing more on the external dimension of urban climate governance, highlighting the importance of cities and city networks in the fields of international relations and environmental governance (e.g. Lee, 2015; Acuto, 2013; Acuto & Rayner, 2016; Herrschel & Newmann, 2017) and arguing that cities and other non-state actors play an important role in modern climate governance (Hale, 2016).

Research that examines the external dimension of urban climate governance looks at the phenomenon mostly on an aggregate level. To find an answer to the question of whether the strong cities in climate governance argument is true or not, it is however necessary to look at concrete cases. This thesis does so by looking at the three biggest German cities: Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich. Do these cities want to play a greater role in global climate governance? Do they want to influence their national government's stance on climate change or maybe even bypass it and influence the international stage directly? How do these three cities compare to the case of US cities? By doing so, the thesis aims to provide a piece of empiric evidence from the German context that helps answer the question if cities all around the world are leading their national governments and are challenging their authority in climate governance.

The selection of the three biggest German cities as the case under investigation follows a number of considerations. The US cities find themselves in a particular situation as their national government is the only one in the world that has announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, which created a power and commitment vacuum that could explain why the cities stepped up in such a meaningful way. Also, there is literature on the climate efforts of megacities such as London or Mexico City that argues that those cities, due to their sheer size, claim a meaningful role in global governance (C40 & Arup, 2015; Kleer & Nawrot, 2018; Sassen, 2005). City behaviour in accordance with the strong cities in climate governance

argument could in such cases thus be explained in an intuitive way. But what about cities that find themselves in a country whose government is committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement? What about cities that are not big enough to naturally claim a role on the world stage? We do not know how such cities define their role and how they might relate to the strong cities in climate governance argument. Investigating the role of German cities thus seems to promise meaningful insights. In contrast to the US, Germany is often seen as role model in climate change mitigation. Also, none of the German cities is big enough to be seen as megacity. As only a limited number of cities could be analysed within the constraints of this thesis, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich were chosen to represent ‘the case of German cities’ (for more details on the case selection, see Section 2.1).

1.2 Research questions

The aim of the thesis is twofold: first, it will provide evidence on how the three cities understand their role in global climate governance. Second, these insights will be lifted to an aggregate level to contribute to the debate on strong cities in climate governance in general. The following two research questions are used to achieve these aims.

RQ1: How do the climate staff of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich understand the role of their respective city in global climate governance?

This question aims to capture the climate staff’s understanding without guiding into a certain direction. An assumption is that the three cities might not be as ambitious as some of their US counterparts or other cities that are often highlighted in climate governance research. Therefore, the question does not refer directly to the strong cities in climate governance argument but allows to capture whatever the climate staff present. Climate staff are defined as city employees whose work involves dealing with climate change. The wide definition allows to talk to a broad range of people if necessary. All three cities have dedicated climate managers within their environmental ministries, and these will be requested primarily for interviews.

RQ2: What can we learn from the insights on the three biggest German cities with regard to the overarching strong cities in climate governance argument?

The aim of this question is to make a contribution to the theoretical debate on the role of cities in climate governance. Does the case of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich rather support the argument, or does it contradict it? What could be learned in the interviews that might enrich the theoretical debate on the topic? What hypotheses can be formulated?

The data analysed will be expert interviews with the three cities’ climate action staff. City press releases and information from the official city website were used to provide contextual information.

The thesis is designed as explorative case study. While the research interest, departing from the strong cities in climate governance argument, is clear, there is very little research on the role of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich in global climate governance that would have allowed to provide orientation or to further specify the research questions. Thus, the explorative case study approach serves to guide the research but also allows for flexibility depending on the results of the interviews.

1.3 Limitations and scope

This thesis aims to generate an understanding of Berlin's, Hamburg's and Munich's role in global climate governance by conducting interviews with their climate staff. It is assumed that the climate staff is the most likely part of the municipal administration to have a clear idea of the city's role in global climate governance. While it would have been interesting to also interview city staff from other parts of the administration such as the ministry of the economy or the ministry of finance to potentially contrast the statements of the climate staff, this was not possible due to time constraints. This presents a shortcoming. It is recommended that the scope of people interviewed is widened in future research on this topic. The author is aware that statements from within the ministry of the environment do not necessarily represent the city's official position as there can be conflicts between different ministries. It was possible to tackle this shortcoming by interviewing high-ranking ministerial employees from all three cities. It can be assumed that these are used to having to take into account inter-ministerial differences in their daily work and would thus take these different positions into account when being asked to describe the city's position on a topic.

Another limitation is that the evidence presented to describe the cities' role in climate governance is purely rhetoric. Instead of looking at what the cities are actually *doing*, this thesis focuses on what the cities climate staff are *saying*. Betsill and Bulkeley (2006) note: "The experience of several local authorities suggests that the process of translating a rhetorical commitment to climate protection into effective policies and programs for controlling GHG emissions is far from straight forward" (p. 144). It is still important to understand rhetoric commitments as no city can take action on an issue without their staff conceiving and formulating an idea first. While this can be seen as a limitation, it is at the same a strength of this thesis' approach to focus on rhetoric as this allows to capture ideas and visions. Instead of retrospectively analysing city actions and taking a more historic perspective, this thesis analyses rhetoric and ideas of the city staff and therefore takes an outlook perspective.

1.4 Implications, relevance and audience

This thesis aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of cities in global climate governance. As Johnson (2018) notes, the impact of cities on international politics still remains poorly understood. The strong cities in climate governance argument currently enjoys a high popularity and can be found in the rhetoric of politicians, journalists and academics (see for example B. Barber, 2017; Bloomberg, 2017; Plumer, 2018; Worland, 2015). It could however be that the argument, as it makes for a good headline – the outlook with regard to climate change is grim and the world desperately needs a hero to turn things around – is a bit inflated. Plumer's (2018) article headline in the New York Times *They Defied Trump on Climate Change. Now, It's Their Moment of Truth* or Barber's (2014) book title *If mayors ruled the world: dysfunctional nations, rising cities* might support this argument as they portrait cities in almost heroic terms. This thesis takes a more sober perspective and tries to shed light on whether the three biggest German cities actually want to take on a bigger role in global climate governance or whether they are satisfied with the status quo. This can provide insights for

Academia – This thesis builds on the extant literature on global environmental governance, transnational climate governance and international relations. While there is a lot of research to build on, it seems that by providing empirical evidence on Berlin's, Hamburg's, and Munich's understanding of their role in climate governance, this thesis can add something novel to the discourse.

Cities, city-networks and other policy makers – This thesis' findings can be of relevance for other cities, city-networks and policy makers around the world that are interested in state of the art research on cities in climate governance or that are seeking to benchmark their actions by looking at the three major German cities as points of reference.

Journalists – The strong cities in climate change argument is a popular theme in journalistic coverage of climate change mitigation efforts. Journalists might thus find relevant insights for their work.

Those interested in climate change mitigation – Last but not least, this thesis can be of relevance for those interested in climate governance who do not fit into one of the above groups. Fighting climate change is a societal effort and the more people want to learn about climate governance, the better.

1.5 Ethical considerations

This thesis builds on data acquired in semi-structured interviews with city officials. All interviews were conducted via telephone and were only recorded after oral consent. None of the interviewees decided to remain anonymous, therefore their names are displayed in this thesis. It was made clear by the author that it is not his intent to present the interviewees' statements out of context, therefore, the interviewees were given the opportunity to approve all direct quotes and indirect references from the interviews in the context they appear in the thesis before publication.

Following the approach for semi-structured interviews, the interviews were based on a questionnaire of 12 questions (see Appendices A and B). In some cases, questions were added or left out based on the position or experience of the interviewee. If requested, the questions were sent prior to the interview. The interviewees were informed about the author's background, his affiliation with Lund University and the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics (IIIEE) as well as the topic of this thesis. When conducting the interviews, great care was taken to avoid leading interviewees to particular responses. However, to clarify certain questions or provoke a reaction, the author confronted the interviewees with hypotheses as reflected in the analytical framework.

1.6 Disposition

Chapter 1 introduced the background of this thesis and introduced the research questions.

Chapter 2 describes the methodological approach including the methods used for data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 3 presents relevant literature and introduces the analytical framework.

Chapter 4 presents the results from the interviews.

Chapter 5 analyses the results according to the analytical framework.

Chapter 6 discusses the results to make a contribution to the academic debate on cities in climate governance.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarising the main findings and presenting suggestions for future research on this topic.

2 Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological choices made including the reasons for adopting an exploratory case study approach. It also justifies the case selection and describes the ways in which data was collected and analysed.

While this thesis builds on rich research from the fields of international relations, global environmental governance and urban governance, the specific angle taken – investigating how the three major German cities understand their role in global climate governance and how this links to the strong cities in climate governance argument – is, to the best of my knowledge, novel.²

The *strong cities in climate governance argument* is a term that I introduce in this thesis. It is based on my review of the relevant literature and is used to give a name to the phenomenon that academics as well as politicians and journalists are portraying cities as what I want to summarise here as ‘new hopeful actors in the fight against climate change’. The strong cities in climate governance argument is not yet a well-defined term that is recognised in the academic field, it is instead my contribution to the debate on cities in climate governance. It cannot be seen as definitive concept, a concept that is defined in a narrow and precise manner that provides a clear idea on what to look for in a research situation. It is much more a sensitizing concept that is less explicitly defined and that gives a general sense of guidance for data collection and data analysis (see Blumer, 1954 who originally introduced the terms definitive and sensitizing concept).

Due to the novelty of the concept and a lack of well-defined hypotheses that could be tested, I decided to adopt a flexible approach. The approach should allow for flexibility in adapting the focus of the research during the research process. While the starting point was clear: the observation that there is a strong cities in climate governance argument and the question how the three major German cities might relate to the concept, it was very much unclear what findings the interviews will yield. It was possible that the city staff would be familiar with the idea of the strong cities in climate governance argument and that they had developed a detailed idea on how to position their city in the playing field of global multi-level governance. It was however also possible that the city staff would not have thought in those dimensions yet and would be confronted with the concept for the first time during the interviews. Depending on how the interviews would develop, I wanted to remain flexible with regard to the analysis and discussion chapters and be able to analyse in depth what the city staff attributed most importance to, instead of deciding on a fixed set of criteria for analysis beforehand. Based on these considerations I decided to adopt an exploratory case study approach.

2.1 Exploratory case study approach and sampling

Explorative case studies are used to study phenomena with a lack of detailed preliminary research, especially a lack of data that would allow the formulation of hypotheses that can be tested (Streb, 2010). The strength of case study approaches include the ability to open up new research fields (Gerring, 2004). Streb states that since the objective is to explore the unknown, the explorative case study approach gives authors the necessary degree of freedom, which

² See Section 3.2.3 of the literature review for a more detailed discussion of the literature gap.

includes “independence with regard to the research design as well as the data collection, as long as these fulfil the required scientific criteria of validity and reliability” (2010, p. 2). Yin (2014) sees the function of exploratory case studies in defining the necessary questions and hypotheses for further research. Streb (2010) notes that explorative case studies are criticised by some in the academic community due to their intuitive approach. He adds that this feature however is simultaneously their biggest strength “when phenomena are studied that are as yet unrecognized” (p. 2).

According to Gerring, a case is best understood as an in-depth analysis of a single event or unit with the objective to develop explanations valid to similar cases (Gerring, 2004, p. 352). The aim of this thesis is to contribute a piece of evidence to the question if the strong cities in climate governance argument is true or not. The argument builds on evidence from cities in the US that can be seen as ‘the case of US cities’ as they all share a number of characteristics that could explain their behaviour in global climate governance: they share the same president that announced to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the same federal system, the same environmental policies on the national level. This thesis looks at a different case, ‘the case of German cities’ that has a different set of characteristics: a government that is committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement, a different political system compared to the US.

While it would have been ideal to look at a large set of German cities with different characteristics including i.e. geographic location and number of inhabitants, only a limited sample could be considered within the time frame available. Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki (2010) note that sampling in case study research “is largely purposeful, that is, it includes the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study” (p. 2). Following this logic, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich were chosen. It was assumed that talking to representatives from these three cities is more likely to produce meaningful results than talking to representatives from other German cities for the following two reasons. Being the largest German cities and having the highest budgets, they are more likely than other German cities

1. to have dedicated climate staff that could have developed ideas on how the city should position itself in global climate governance and
2. have the budget required to play a role on the international stage.

Instead of identifying a set of hypotheses in the beginning of the research process, the exploratory approach aims at identifying hypotheses. These will thus find their place in the end sections of this thesis.

The empiric evidence in this thesis is statements from city representatives made during the interviews. While one could argue that rhetoric, including ideas and visions about the future, is less reliable than concrete city actions (for example laws passed by the municipal parliament) that one analyses retrospectively, this thesis is based on the constructivist idea that reality is created through language and that by making statements on their city’s role in global climate governance, the city representatives *create* their city’s role. This makes it very relevant to analyse the rhetoric of city representatives (see for example Onuf, 1998 for an introduction to constructivism).

As Streb (2010) noted, it is important to ensure reliability and validity of the research when choosing an exploratory case study approach. Reliability (the consistency of the research) is strengthened in this thesis through rigorous application of the analytical framework and a structured analysis based on full transcripts of all interviews (see 2.3).

Validity (the questions of whether I measure what I intend to measure) is strengthened through

- the use of a robust research framework based on peer-reviewed literature,
- having conducted background interviews with experts in the design phase of the thesis and peer-review in the writing process of the thesis,
- data triangulation (even though a larger number of cities and interviewees would even have been more preferable),
- asking the interviewees to approve all direct and indirect quotes to ensure that they were reproduced correctly.

2.2 Data collection

2.2.1 Literature review

Academic literature was reviewed to 1) establish a theoretical framework based on regime theory, transnational municipal networks, and multi-level governance, 2) create an overview of the traditional notion of climate governance, urban climate governance, 3) establish the ways in which cities are expected to act in multi-level governance, both within their jurisdictions as well as in relation with external actors.

Both academic literature as well as grey literature in the form of newspaper articles, speeches and press releases from cities, city networks and other organisations was reviewed to establish the strong cities in climate governance argument. Grey literature released by Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich was used to provide background knowledge for the interviews as well as for the presentation of general facts e.g. climate goals of the cities.

2.2.2 Background interviews

In addition to discussions with my supervisor Kes McCormick, I talked to Luis Mundaca and Henner Busch in the process of designing this thesis. McCormick works at the IIIIEE, is an expert on cities and governance and is the program coordinator for Sharing Cities Sweden. Mundaca also works at the IIIIEE where he assesses policy interventions from the perspective of environmental economics. He served as Lead Author for the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5C. Busch works at the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies. In his PhD, he investigated the impact of transnational urban networks in Germany that were set up in response to climate change. These interviews provided valuable input to the overall research design, the scope of the thesis and the establishment of the research questions.

2.2.3 Interviews with city representatives

A total of six interviews were conducted with city climate staff: three in Hamburg, two in Berlin and one in Munich. The aim was to interview city representatives that work on the topic of climate change and if possible, focus on the external dimension, i.e. city networks, international affairs of climate change, EU relations or similar as it was assumed that people working in these fields would be best qualified to provide meaningful answers. The aim was to interview three representatives from each city. Berlin and Hamburg both provide organisational charts of their city staff online, so that it was possible to contact the interviewees directly. The aim of three interviews was reached in Hamburg. While contact was established to several possible interviewees in Berlin, only two were realised in the end. Munich does not provide contact details online, so that the contact had to be established through the city's press office. This unfortunately led to only one interview. An overall issue

was that the number of people working on the external dimension of climate governance in the three cities is very limited. While contact was established to a large number of possible interviewees, many interviews got cancelled with the remark that I had already spoken to the head of the division or to the person that is most competent to answer my questions. While it would have definitely been favourable to have a larger sample size, very high-ranking representatives were interviewed in all three cities. See Appendix D for a complete list of interviewees.

2.3 Data analysis

An analytical framework (see Section 3.5) was developed based on the literature review. The framework consists of expectations on how cities can act within multi-level governance both in an external dimension (relating to other actors such as city networks, nation-states or the EU) and an internal dimension (measures the city can take within its jurisdiction).

During the interviews, notes were taken to immediately capture the key themes brought up by the interviewee. After completion, all interviews were fully transcribed. In a next step, each transcript was read through to identify themes that might have been missed during the note-taking as well as to identify striking quotes. Then, the interview results were condensed with results from the same city to create a 'city position'. These condensed versions of the interviews that still largely follow the interview structure are presented in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, the results were further condensed and re-structured according to the categories of the analytical framework to allow for an analysis of the results and a comparison between the three cities.

In Chapter 6, the results were discussed and the research questions were answered.

In Chapter 7, hypotheses for future research were established.

3 Literature review

This chapter discusses the literature that the thesis builds on. It first introduces the theoretical framework, consisting of the three theories of international regimes, transnational networks and multi-level governance. This is followed by a historic overview of the field of climate governance and city engagement, showing how climate change governance was traditionally framed as topic to be negotiated by nation-states before cities entered the scene. After that, the strong cities in climate governance argument is introduced and a working definition is established, before an example of strong cities in climate governance in the form of US cities is presented. This is followed by literature on the actions that cities can take in multi-level climate governance, both internally and externally. These insights are then used to construct an analytical framework that guides the analysis of interview data in Chapter 5.

3.1 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is needed that can guide this research. The role of the theory is to lay out the general principles and ideas on the subject and provide a certain ‘corridor’ in which the work of this thesis can be conducted. What must a theory provide that can guide this research? As the topic is the role of cities in global climate governance, the theory must provide a resolution that is high enough to look at cities as actors (some theories do not open the black box nation-state). The theory must also be able to describe the role of cities in a *global* context, thus not only within the boundaries of the nation-state, but beyond. The theory must allow us to look at climate governance, thus at environmental politics.

Within international relations, regime theory and transnational networks have been used to analyse processes of global environmental governance (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006, p. 145). These theories however have shortcomings in being able to describe the role that cities are playing in global environmental governance. The theory of multi-level governance is better suited to do so. Nevertheless, regime theory and transnational networks did influence the establishment of the multi-level governance theory and are still helpful to understand large aspects of the functioning of global climate governance. In the following, I present the three theories and discuss their advantages and shortcomings in capturing the issue at hand.

3.1.1 Regime theory

The underlying principle of regime theory is that when nation-states meet at the international level and agree on a certain topic, they form a regime (see for example Krasner, 1982). According to Krasner, one of the theoretical fathers of regime theory, regimes are the “principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area” (1982, p. 186). Young (1997) defines regimes as “social institutions that consist of agreed upon principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures, and programs that govern the interaction of actors in specific issue areas” (pp. 5-6). Regimes are established in a specific issue area to facilitate cooperation among states and usually form around international treaties such as the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement in the case of climate change. Regime analysis mostly deals with the questions if regimes are effective, and effective meaning that they allow nation-states to successfully cooperate.

There are alternative, constructivist approaches within regime theory that emphasise the role of ideas and this type of analysis focuses on how norms are constructed in international regimes and how these in turn shape the way nation-states perceive their interests (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006). Betsill and Bulkeley add that those alternative approaches acknowledge the important role that non-state actors such as intergovernmental organisations, non-

governmental organisations (NGOs), or scientists can play in the formation of international regimes. However, the significance of non-state actors is mostly measured in terms of the extent to which they can influence the behaviour of nation-states. This follows the assumption of regime theory that only nation-states, as unitary actors, hold political power.

“This top-down perspective assumes a vertical relationship between the international, national, regional, and local scales and ignores the role of local governments as important sites of global environmental governance in their own right” (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006, p. 146).

Betsill and Bulkeley (2006) make clear that regime theory does not open the black box nation-state and that it pays little to no regard to processes on the sub-national level. Regime theory thus rather fits a perspective of *government* instead of *governance*. However, regime theory is useful to analyse the behaviour of nation-states in global climate governance and is used in this thesis to describe what I call the ‘traditional notion of climate governance’ – climate governance as traditionally conducted by nation-states, or in other words the current climate regime. Today, this regime is humanity’s central mechanism to combat climate change and this thesis deals with questions on how cities relate to the regime: Do they try to be recognised by it? Do they try to influence it? Do they bypass it and try to establish other forms of authority?

3.1.2 Transnational networks

Transnational networks are important to consider here, as city networks, often referred to as transnational municipal networks, short TMNs, play a big role in city engagement in global climate governance. Risse-Kappen defines transnational networks as “regular interaction across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or intergovernmental organization” (1995, p. 3). According to Betsill and Bulkeley (2006), three central network concepts have been developed in relation to global environmental governance: epistemic communities, transnational advocacy networks, and global civil society.

Epistemic communities are networks of experts that hold knowledge on a certain issue. These gain influence in the international regime as policy makers turn to them under conditions of uncertainty (Haas, 1992, p. 55).

Transnational advocacy networks include “those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 2). Keck and Sikkink state that transnational advocacy networks “use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies” (1998, p. 16). Betsill and Bulkeley (2006) argue that in contrast to classic regime theory in which power stems from economic and military force and where the exchange of power is seen as zero-sum game, epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks assume that power can also be generated through expertise or through moral concepts.

“Nevertheless, in both the epistemic communities and transnational advocacy network approaches, the power of networks lie in their ability to influence nation-states, which remain the location of governance. Thus, these approaches reinforce an interpretation of global environmental governance where ‘government’ is at the heart of the analysis and in which the nature of the state is effectively ‘back-boxed’” (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006, p. 148).

The third approach of transnational networks, called global civil society, is less focused on actions taken by the state but takes into account a variety of actors and institutions that shape global environmental issues (Lipschutz & Mayer, 1996).

“Not only are networks considered influential insofar as they shape the range and extent of state action, but also as an important site for governing global environmental issues in their own right. Collectively, the focus on transnational networks marks a shift within the discipline of international relations from a preoccupation with hierarchical structures toward an appreciation of the importance of network forms of organization” (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006, p. 148).

While the concept of epistemic communities is not really relevant for the analysis of city actions in global climate governance, cities can behave as the concepts of transnational advocacy networks and global civil society suggest. They can form networks that try to influence nation-states that remain the location of governance or those networks can be sites of governance themselves. We can see an example for the latter in TMNs such as The Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy. By joining the network, its members commit themselves to reaching the EU’s climate and energy targets and agree to submit a sustainable energy and climate action plan that lays out how the targets should be reached that needs to be updated every two years (Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy - Europe, n.d.). The network thus not only tries to influence nation-states but conducts governance independently.

3.1.3 Multi-level governance

While transnational networks already constitute a departure from traditional regime theory, they mostly still see the nation-state as the main actor in global climate governance. Multi-level governance offers an alternative view on this but before we can talk about multi-level governance, it is necessary to understand what governance means.

Betsill & Bulkeley (2006) state that “[w]hile there are many different perspectives and interpretations of the term governance, broadly speaking we can say that it involves processes through which collective goals are defined and pursued in which the state (or government) is not necessarily the only or most important actor” (p. 144). Governance thus means that the state does not simply dictate pathways for future developments but that a number of actors that can be both state and non-state take those decisions together. Taking a governance perspective means recognising the multitude of actors involved in the process of governing. Betsill & Bulkeley (2006) note that “[s]uch an approach is particularly relevant in the context of global environmental issues, where modes of government are multiple and include processes and institutions that transverse scales as well as networks of actors that cannot be easily characterized by the state/non-state dichotomy” (p. 144).

The concept of multi-level governance was developed in the early 1990s by Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe to describe the process of European integration. State-centric writers (e.g. Garrett, 1992; Hoffmann, 1996; Moravcsik, 1991; Streeck, 2019) claimed that in the process of European integration, the nation-state remained the central decision-maker and that while states might decide to transfer part of their authority to the EU, they only did so to achieve national goals; supranational bodies would thus not be autonomous agents but would serve state interests. Writers in support of the multi-level governance perspective such as Marks and Hooghe however argued that authority that was formerly held exclusively by the state was transferred upwards to the supranational EU as well as downwards to subnational bodies (Marks, Hooghe, & Blank, 1996). It was no longer national governments alone that held the power to make decisions. Instead, European integration had dispersed parts of that power away from the nation state to other political levels such as the EU Commission on the supranational level or to local governments on the subnational level. The multi-level

governance perspective allowed researchers to investigate how actors on those different levels worked together to reach political decisions; in other words how they conducted governance.

While the concept of multi-level governance has its origin in the analysis of European integration, it has been developed since and has been deemed useful in analysing environmental governance. Betsill and Bulkeley state that “[t]he concept of multilevel governance, with its emphasis on the connections between vertical tiers of government and horizontally organized forms of governance, provides a useful starting point for understanding the ways in which environmental problems are governed within and across scales” (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006, p. 149).

In 2001, Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe suggested that there is a “bedrock agreement that governance has become (and should be) multi-level” (p. 1). They suggested that there are two types of multi-level governance. In type 1, authority is dispersed to a limited number of non-overlapping jurisdictions such as in a federal state. The state remains the central actor in this type of governance and is responsible for all international relations. Local governments however enjoy a certain degree of authority (Marks & Hooghe, 2001, p. 1). Type 2 describes interactions between state and non-state actors in a flexible, non-tiered system with overlapping jurisdictions that mostly emerge at the boundaries of formal politics (Marks & Hooghe, 2001, p. 1).

According to Marks and Hooghe, the normative argument for multi-level governance is that “[b]ecause externalities arising from the provision of public goods vary immensely—from planet-wide in the case of global warming to local in the case of most city services—so should the scale of governance. To internalize externalities, governance must be multi-level” (2001, p. 4). Bulkeley (2010) adds that from a multilevel governance perspective, the development of urban climate governance is situated “at the interface of horizontal networked forms of authority and vertical divisions of responsibilities among different parts of the state” (p. 237).

As Bulkeley describes in the above quote, multi-level governance opens a playing field for actors that consists of two axes: a vertical axis that describes the hierarchical levels (e.g. international level, national level, city level, civil society) and a horizontal axis that describes interactions at the same hierarchical level but extending into other jurisdictions, for example interactions from one city to another city in a different country.

The playing field that multi-level governance opens, is well suited to guide the research this thesis sets out to do. Its resolution is high enough to look at cities as actors whereas regime theory only assumes nation-states as acting elements. It also allows us to look at the role of the city in a global context as the playing field it opens is not limited to national boundaries. Also, the theory can easily be applied to the topic of environmental governance as it has been demonstrated for example by authors such as Betsill and Bulkeley. While multi-level governance has some distinct advantages over regime theory and transnational networks and thus constitutes the main theory used in this thesis, the other two theories are still useful as reference points and had a huge impact on the development of multi-level governance. Together, the three theories form the theoretical framework of this thesis.

3.2 Historic overview of climate governance, city engagement and city research

After having introduced the theoretical framework, this section gives a historic overview of climate governance, the role of cities in climate governance and the research conducted on this issue.

3.2.1 The traditional notion of climate governance

Early climate governance was dominated by national and international actors that framed climate change as a global problem (Bulkeley, 2010; Kern & Mol, 2013). The perspective of cities was mostly neglected because climate change was seen as a problem that needed to be solved by nation-states and the idea that only they can exercise the legitimacy and sovereignty needed to address climate change was widespread, thus turning climate change into a subject of traditional international relations (Kern & Mol, 2013).

We can see different examples of this by looking at the most prominent bodies governing climate change. In 1988, the countries of the world established the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, followed by the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* in 1992. As the highlighted parts show, nation-states play the central role in these bodies. This continued in later stages with the establishment of yearly COPs, the meetings of the *Member States* of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol that introduced binding obligations for 38 industrialised *countries*.

The fact that climate change was initially framed as subject of traditional international relations suits the principles of regime theory. The countries of the world met at the international stage to establish a common institution to deal with the issue of climate change: the UNFCCC. If we use Young's (1997) definition, who said that regimes are "social institutions that consist of agreed upon principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures, and programs that govern the interaction of actors in specific issue areas" (pp. 5-6), we can see that the UNFCCC and the annual meetings of nation-states, the COPs, as well as institutions such as the IPCC form the international climate regime.

3.2.2 Cities in climate governance

Not late after nation-states started working on the issue of climate change, cities did so, too. Bulkeley (2010) states that individual cities, predominantly in North America and Europe started engaging with the issue in the early 1990s. She calls this the *first wave* of city engagement. Bulkeley states that most active cities were relatively small in scale (e.g. Leicester and Kirkcaldy in the United Kingdom and Heidelberg and Frankfurt in Germany), which led to their efforts going largely unnoticed. Even though the first transnational city networks dealing with climate change were established (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, *energie-cités*), which gave the cities some exposure, Bulkeley states that national governments as well as the international climate regime at this point showed little interest in the activities of cities. In addition, research found a gap between rhetoric commitments and actual initiatives put forward by cities, in other words, they were not walking the talk (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009).

In the early 2000s, a *second wave* of city engagement kicked off, encompassing a new generation of city networks and wider geographical range of active cities (Bulkeley, 2010). C40 is an example of a city network that started to actively engage with private actors e.g. with Microsoft to produce software for GHG emissions accounting or in a retrofitting program to increase the energy efficiency of buildings that brings together cities, buildings owners, banks and energy providers (Bulkeley, 2010).

"In addition, urban networks have taken a more overtly political stance toward the issue, seeking to position cities as critical sites for addressing the issue of climate change or even opposing national governments (as in the United States and Australia), and in so doing have advanced claims for the strategic importance of urban governance" (Bulkeley, 2010, p. 233).

The COP in Copenhagen in 2009 is often used as point of reference by commentators, for example by Lee (2013), who states that while national governments were unable to agree on a

common climate policy at the 2009 COP, cities from all around the world have actively engaged in efforts to address climate change. Gordon and Johnson (2017) mention that between the COP in Copenhagen and the COP in Paris, established networks like ICLEI and the C40 underwent meaningful transformations intended to increase their capacity to motivate and coordinate their members and in addition, many new city networks emerged.

Based on Bulkeley's classification in first and second wave, one could argue that recent developments can be seen as a *third wave* of city engagement that is characterised by cities being increasingly recognised by the climate regime and also trying to actively influence it. Gordon and Johnson (2017) state that while prior to Copenhagen, the aim of most networks was to improve urban governance, new initiatives like the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) are meant to increase the opportunities of cities to contribute to the official interstate negotiations. NAZCA was established by the UN, Peru, and France in 2014 as a portal in which non-nation-state actors can display their commitments to act on climate change. The UNFCCC writes that "the portal was born from the realization that addressing climate change will take ambitious, broad-based action by all sectors of society, public and private" (UNFCCC, 2018, paragraph 2). Cities, among other non-state actors, are even recognised in Article 118 of the Paris Agreement that "[w]elcomes the efforts of non-Party stakeholders to scale up their climate actions, and encourages the registration of those actions in the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action platform" (UNFCCC, 2015b).

Other examples for this trend are the appointment of the former mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, as UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate change to spur additional commitments and concrete climate action by mayors around the world (C40, 2014) or the decision of the NGO Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), which offers a standardised carbon emissions reporting scheme to companies, to launch a cities programme, giving cities an easy way to report their emissions in a standardised form and to make their actions seen on the international stage (CDP, n.d.).

Cities have also increased the quality of the work done within their jurisdictions compared to the 1990s, when a gap between rhetoric commitments and concrete action was apparent (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Today, many cities have moved beyond symbolic statements and are pursuing more substantial urban climate governance: they are setting targets, measure emissions and implement concrete climate policies (Gordon & Johnson, 2017). City networks, often referred to as transnational municipal networks, play a large role in urban climate governance. They allow cities to share knowledge and best-practices on the implementation of low-carbon technologies and to gain access to finance and technologies in ways that a single city would not be able to (Johnson, 2018). City networks have led to the diffusion of climate goals and methodologies amongst its members. By joining the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, its member cities for example commit themselves to reaching the EU's climate and energy targets and to report on their progress in a systematic manner. City networks played an important role in unifying municipal climate action, comparable to the way in which the Kyoto protocol or the Paris Agreement have unified the climate actions of nation-states. Cities also use the networks in an advocacy function to make their voices heard on the international stage. While a single city might not be seen as important actor, a city network, representing millions of people can gain more attention by nation-states (Johnson, 2018). C40 for example follows this logic in its external relations by stating that its 94 member cities represent more than 700 million people and one quarter of the global economy (C40, 2018).

We can conclude that city engagement in climate governance has come a long way since the early 1990s. Cities have become significant actors in global climate governance. They drive

forward efforts in their own jurisdictions and join forces in national as well as transnational networks to address climate change in international arenas (Lee, 2013).

3.2.3 Research on cities in climate governance

Early research on urban governance dates back to the mid-1990s and had a focus on governance within the city, thus looking at the internal dimension of urban governance (Bulkeley, 2010). More recent research started focusing more on the external dimension of urban governance, investigating how cities and city networks relate to other actors in the multi-level governance system, focusing primarily on global cities (Taedong Lee, 2015) and international relations (Acuto, 2013; Acuto & Rayner, 2016; Herrschel & Newman, 2017).

Examples of research on the internal dimension of urban climate governance

Bode and Lehmkuhl (2007) analysed the Hamburg CO₂ competition, a project that was launched by the Ministry of the Environment of the City of Hamburg to promote GHG emissions reductions at the local level. Byrne et al. (2016) explored a capital market strategy for the implementation of urban photovoltaic in six case study cities: Amsterdam, London, Munich, New York City, Seoul, and Tokyo. Both are examples of a traditional internal perspective, looking at how policies are implemented in either a single case or in a larger group of case study cities.

Examples of research on the external dimension of urban climate governance

Authors like Betsill and Bulkeley (2006) have largely contributed to the field by demonstrating how city actions can be analysed using the multi-level governance approach. This laid the groundwork for more recent research. Bulkeley writes that work on urban responses to climate change “was among the first to challenge traditional approaches that regarded the international community, and the development of regimes, as the exclusive site of global environmental politics” (2010, p. 236).

Authors like Barber (2014) take a normative stance and argue for an increased role of cities in global climate governance. Other authors like Tavares (2016), Chan et al. (2016), Hale (2016) and Bäckstrand (2017) are examples of recent research taking a more analytical approach while investigating the external dimension of urban climate governance. Tavares (2016) demonstrates how cities have entered the domain of international relations that was traditionally reserved for nation-states and thus have effectively altered the traditional notion of climate governance. Chan et al. (2016) argue that transnational climate action has become a distinguishable sphere of climate governance. They further argue that the intergovernmental and transnational spheres of global climate governance could mutually reinforce each other if the UNFCCC begins to engage non-state actors consistently and systematically. Hale (2016) argues that while non-state climate action had already been growing over time, the Paris Agreement brings it to the heart of the new climate regime. Bäckstrand et al. (2017) argue that the Paris Agreement has led to a system of ‘hybrid multilateralism’ in which state and non-state actors both play important roles:

“Overall, the Paris Agreement has led to a system that institutionalizes hybrid multilateralism: it strikes a middle position between bottom-up polycentricity and top-down targets-and-timetables by combining intergovernmental and transnational action. The Paris Agreement accepts that NDCs submitted by states are the backbone of mitigation, adaptation, and finance, but also acknowledges that non-state actors are indispensable in these pursuits as governors, implementers, experts and watchdogs. Ultimately, this hybrid architecture cements the UNFCCC as the lynchpin between state and non-state

by both formalizing as well as blurring (in some key regards) distinctions across several dimensions” (Bäckstrand et al., 2017, pp. 567–568).

While these examples show that there is a variety of research on cities and climate governance, certain aspects of the field still lack academic attention.

Research gap

Six years ago, Kern and Mol (2013) stated that researchers in the field of urban climate governance had until recently focused mostly on local mitigation activities. They found that “research on vertical and horizontal coordination and integration of climate governance systems is still underdeveloped” (Kern & Mol, 2013, p. 3).

Five years later, Johnson (2018) still comes to a similar conclusion. He writes that at first glance, it looks like there was a plenitude of books on cities and global climate governance. He argues however that research on global climate governance, cities and climate change, and global governance has largely occurred in isolation. He continues by stating that while there are many books on the role of cities in global climate governance (e.g. B. Barber, 2014; Johnson, Toly, & Schroeder, 2015; Taedong Lee, 2015; Tavares, 2016), many are either empirical studies looking at the factors and processes influencing the role of cities in global climate governance (e.g. Tavares, 2016) or normative statements arguing for extending the role of cities (e.g. Barber, 2014). Johnson (2018) states that “[t]o date, relatively little has been written about the ways in which city engagement in global climate politics affects our understanding of power in global environmental regimes” (p. 10) and Gordon and Johnson (2017) state that the “agency of cities [...] continues to be under-explored, leading to a consequent need for careful investigation into the politics of transnational urban governance” (p. 14).

Acknowledging the lack of research on the agency of cities in the multi-level governance system, this thesis sets out to contribute to filling this research gap by gathering first-hand information from city representatives on how they see the role of their city in global climate governance and then using that empirical data to make a contribution to the theoretical debate.

3.3 The strong cities in climate governance argument

The previous section has shown that city engagement in climate governance has grown substantially since the first cities picked up the topic in the early 1990s. As introduced in the first chapter, some commentators are even convinced that cities are leading national governments in the fight against climate change. I call this *the strong cities in climate governance argument*. This section introduces the argument more thoroughly and establishes a working definition for further use before giving more background on today’s most prominent case of strong cities in climate governance: the city movement in the US.

3.3.1 Introducing and defining the argument

According to UNEP (2018), limiting climate change to 1.5 degrees compared to pre-industrial levels would require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” (paragraph 4). While the issue of climate change has been known for decades, it took a long time before the countries of the world introduced serious action to counter it. The adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 was a good first step but only introduced mitigation targets for 38 industrialised countries. A follow-up agreement was needed to lift climate change mitigation to the next level, but for many years no consensus could be found. The hopes were

high that the 2009 COP in Copenhagen would be the breakthrough and would deliver a global agreement but again, no consensus was found. After a global consensus was finally reached in Paris in 2015, the expectation was that the urgency with which climate action is conducted globally would increase. Research has however found that nation-states do not show the ambitiousness required to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees (e.g. UNEP, 2019) and that we are still far away from seeing rapid, far-reaching unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.

While nation-states were only progressing very slowly in terms of climate action, cities had started to introduce their own mitigation policies and started to make their voices heard at the international level, demanding for more ambitious climate action. Even when the national governments failed to act at the 2009 COP in Copenhagen, local governments across the globe engaged in mitigation activities (T. Lee, 2013). This has led to the emergence of the prominent theme ‘cities act, while nations talk’ (e.g. Gordon & Johnson, 2017, p. 1).

The former mayor of New York, Fiorello LaGuardia, is known for having said that “there is no Democratic or Republican way of fixing a sewer” (LaGuardia, n.d.), emphasising the argument that mayors are able to and are even required to act in a more pragmatic way than policy makers at the national level. C40 uses this rhetoric to promote itself:

“City mayors are directly accountable to their constituents for their decisions, and are more nimble than state and national elected officials to take decisive action—often with immediate and impactful results. What our cities do individually and in unison to address climate change can set the agenda for communities and governments everywhere” (C40, n.d., paragraph 6).

According to Mark Watts, director of C40,

“[t]he national state is the same late-18th-century model designed to defend its borders, not to solve problems. But the job of the mayor demands action. These days, people in all the world’s big cities want much the same: clean air, public transport and cycles and not cars. There is no debate any more about there being a choice between economic growth or climate change action. Mayors have to use their powers to the maximum” (Watts in Vidal, 2015, paragraph 10).

Johnson (2018) tells us that “the idea that cities and city-networks are stepping in – or more appropriately – stepping up where national governments and internationals have failed to act [is a] narrative that has generated considerable attention among scholars, activists and politicians involved in the study and practice of global climate governance” (p. 50). I call this the *strong cities in climate governance argument* and we can find many examples of policy-makers, media or academic scholars using the narrative.

Examples from policy-makers

Frank Jensen, the mayor of Copenhagen states: “We cannot wait for the heads of state – citizens expect mayors to do something” (Jensen in Vidal, 2015, paragraph 14).

California’s Governor Jerry Brown shares this view stating that “[w]e don’t have to wait for the federal government to say jump. We’re already moving” (Jerry Brown, Governor of California, as cited by Worland, 2015, paragraph 4).

Don Iverson, the Mayor of Edmonton states:

“Cities are already leading the charge to combat climate change and Edmonton is proud to stand side by side with the other cities around the world taking courageous action. With the majority of the world’s

population living in urban centres, we need to strive to make cities even healthier and more sustainable to live in and tackling climate change is part of the solution” (Don Iveson, Mayor of Edmonton, as cited by Future Earth, 2018, paragraph 5).

The Global Covenant of Mayors writes in its 2018 Aggregation Report:

“As countries consider how to increase their ambition in the lead-up to implementing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Climate Agreement in 2020, this analysis shows that city commitments already made through the GCoM exceed the ambition of NDCs as currently defined” (Global Covenant of Mayors, 2018, p. 1).

“Mayors are incredibly fired up and they’re proud of what they accomplished,” says John Coequyt, the Sierra Club’s director of federal and international climate campaigns. “If cities take this seriously, they can be huge drivers of progress without any real support from national governments” (John Coequyt as cited by Worland, 2015, paragraph 11).

Examples from media

The BBC writes: “Cities lead the way on curbing carbon emissions. With many countries struggling to cut their carbon, [...] major cities are making substantial strides to stem their emissions” (McGrath, 2018, paragraph 1).

The New York Times writes about “A ‘new world’ in foreign policy [...] leaders of We Are Still In are seeking to conduct their own version of foreign policy on climate change – forging partnerships with other local governments in countries like China to address global warming and urging leaders abroad to do more – at a time when the Trump administration has disengaged on the issue” (Plumer, 2018, paragraphs 24-25).

The Guardian writes: *The fight against climate change: four cities leading the way in the Trump era* (Milman, Luscombe, & Dart, 2017) and *Cities bypass slow government to lead the way on climate change* (Scott, 2013).

Examples from academia

Johnson states that “there is also a growing realization that a great deal of the action that is taking place in the name of climate change mitigation and adaptation is occurring outside of the official multilateral regime, highlighting the role of city-networks in global climate politics” (Johnson, 2018, p. 31) and that “[c]oncerns about the inability of national governments and international institutions to achieve meaningful cuts have therefore reinvigorated discussions about the role of cities and transnational city-networks in filling the gap” (Johnson, 2018, p. 7).

Acuto adds that “[o]ver the past two years, urban issues – from sustainability in the built environment, to inequality in cities – have become an international priority. Cities, in turn, are taking on a more important role in global politics; the growth of city diplomacy has forged hundreds of city networks and thousands of transnational initiatives. These developments have been disrupting the established political order. Cities are now relating directly to global instruments, treaties and commitments, often bypassing states – as seen in the steps taken by many cities to implement the Paris Agreement on climate change, despite opposition from central governments” (Acuto, 2017, paragraphs 1-2).

Benjamin Barber is the author that is probably best known for its strong normative arguments in favour of cities taking the lead in the fight against climate change. He argues that cities are

even better equipped than nation-states to deal with complex issues such as climate change (2014). In his Book *If Mayors Ruled The World* (2014), Barber argues in favour of transforming existing international organisations by adding a congress of mayors that can bypass the UN and the existing system of nation-states that, in his eyes, is ineffective. He argues that local action and global cooperation among cities could lead to pragmatic solutions instead of ideology and sovereignty-driven politics. He adds that the most important factor with regard to the effectiveness of cities in tackling climate change is that they are unburdened with the issues of borders and sovereignty, which weaken the capacity of nation-states to work with one another. In a 2017 Guardian article, Barber wrote: “Keen to confront global warming, but not yet fully empowered to do so, cities must not only accept their responsibility for assuring a sustainable world but assert their right to do so” (B. Barber, 2017). He continued by stating that “[t]here are two formidable obstacles blocking a larger role for cities: a paucity of resources and the absence of autonomy and jurisdiction. [...] If cities are to get the power they need, they will have to demand the right of self-governance” (Barber, 2017, paragraphs 14-16).

Defining the strong cities in climate governance argument

If we look at all these examples, what is the essence of the strong cities in climate governance argument? The first element is that cities are leading nation-states in the fight against climate change – cities are taking action while nation-states are unwilling or are struggling to do so (e.g. Mayor Don Iveson as cited by Future Earth, 2018; Global Covenant of Mayors, 2018). I define taking action in this regard as having policies in place that are more ambitious than the policies of the national government.

The second element is that cities challenge the authority of nation-states and disrupt the political order by taking on a more important role in global politics (e.g. Acuto, 2017; Plumer, 2018; Scott, 2013). According to the traditional notion of climate governance, nation-states are the actors that conduct climate governance in the international regime. This is based on the Westphalian order that ascribes nation-states the authority to conduct international relations. By “relating directly to global instruments, treaties and commitments, often bypassing states” as Acuto (2017, paragraphs 1-2) writes, cities claim the same authority and disrupt the political order.

The third element is that cities act without support or even despite opposition by the national government (e.g. Acuto, 2017; John Coequyt as cited by Worland, 2015). Together, these three elements form my working definition of the strong cities in climate governance argument (see Figure 3-5).

Working definition of the strong cities in climate governance argument

1. Cities lead national governments in the fight against climate change by having more ambitious policies in place than their national government.
2. Cities challenge the authority of nation-states and disrupt the political order by taking on a more important role in global politics.
3. Cities act without support from or even despite opposition by the national government.

Figure 3-1: Working definition of the strong cities in climate governance argument
Source: Own elaboration

3.3.2 An example of strong cities in climate governance: the case of US cities

President Trump announced the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in June 2017 and started to roll back climate policies that had been introduced under President Obama. By doing so, he created a political vacuum in the US climate governance: the national government demonstrated that it would no longer pursue climate action. In response, a large number of sub-national bodies including cities, states, tribes, businesses and universities united under the label ‘We Are Still In’ and reaffirmed their commitment to continue to support climate action to meet the Paris Agreement (Bloomberg, 2017).

The We Are Still In campaign represents 155 million US citizens and 9.45 trillion US Dollars in gross domestic product (GDP) (We Are Still In, 2019), which equals about half the US population and half the US GDP. If the members of We Are Still In were a country, they would be the world’s third largest economy behind China and the US. The former mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, who is one of the leaders of We Are Still In, announced that he is confident that climate action taken by non-state actors will keep the US on course to meeting its commitments made under the Paris Agreement:

“I am confident the broad array of leaders and organizations [...] will work together to reduce U.S. carbon emissions by 26 percent by 2025, just as we had pledged in Paris. These groups will take rigorous and ambitious actions to address climate change, and we will communicate those actions in a transparent and accountable way to the UN. The United States can, and will, meet its commitment under the Paris Agreement” (Bloomberg in Carriero, 2017, paragraph 4).

He stressed that

“[t]he bulk of the decisions which drive U.S. climate action in the aggregate are made by cities, states, businesses, and civil society. The federal role, ideally, is to coordinate and support those efforts. In the absence of a supportive federal coordinating role, these actors will more closely coordinate their own decarbonization actions. Collectively, they will redouble their efforts to ensure that the U.S. achieves the carbon emissions reductions it pledged under the Paris Agreement” (Bloomberg, 2017, paragraph 2).

The movement by non-state actors is not only talk but cities are also introducing relevant policies. The mayors of New York, Chicago and Washington D.C. for example have signed executive orders to make the goals of the Paris Agreement goals their own and cities like Portland and Pittsburgh have announced 100 percent renewable energy targets (Watts, 2017).

Statements by the mayors of Washington, D.C. and New York and former Secretary of State John Kerry suit the definition of the strong cities in climate governance argument that was established in the previous section.

Mayor Bowser of Washington D.C. stated:

“On June 5, 2017, in response to President Trump’s decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, I signed an Executive Order reaffirming Washington, D.C.’s commitment to the historic deal. The effects of climate change are already here, and in Washington, D.C. – our nation’s capital – we value building a more sustainable society and a greener future. At a moment in history when our federal government should be leading the way to protect our planet, the responsibility is instead falling to America’s cities, with the support of states, businesses, and citizens, to provide global leadership. More than 360 U.S. cities have now pledged to intensify their efforts to meet ambitious climate goals and work together to create a 21st century clean energy economy” (Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, D.C. in Cities 100, 2017, p. 6).

New York's mayor Bill de Blasio stated:

“Even if our president turns a blind eye, we will act. We feel fully empowered and I know that my colleagues around the country feel the same and so many around the world. We will act. At a certain point if we will all act, our national governments need to come along, at a certain point if we all act, we create a new reality, regardless of any vote taken in the Congress or a parliament. We have more tools sometimes than we even recognise. And if anyone anywhere says it cannot be done, please, tell him to come to New York City and see it happening right now” (Mayor Bill de Blasio in City of New York, Mayor's Office, 2017, minute 20:19).

John Kerry, former Secretary of State, stated:

“I have been arguing and it absolutely bears repeating: the current Administration may have pulled out of Paris, but the American people are all-in. The United States will meet its commitment. We've seen and together we are helping build greater energy to meeting this goal. Mayors, governors, companies, and universities have already made great progress – we're already halfway there – and Mike Bloomberg is taking an important step, formally collating these efforts into a societal NDC for the United Nations. This is only the start and I will have more to announce shortly, but make no mistake, the United States will continue to lead in the global fight against climate change” (John Kerry in Carriero, 2017, paragraph 6).

We can see that the case of US cities meets all three elements of the stronger cities in climate governance argument. There is a lack of commitment on the national level, but cities are still committed to the Paris Agreement and thus have more ambitious policies in place than the national government. The national government does not support the cities and even works against them. By stating ‘we are still in’, by wanting to claim a seat at the UNFCCC negotiations and by wanting to submit a societal NDC to the UN, the movement clearly challenges the authority of the US national government and heavily disrupts the political order. That is why the US cities are currently the prime example of strong cities in climate governance and it is why they are used as point of reference in this thesis.

3.4 How cities can act in the multi-level governance system

After having introduced theories relevant to the study of cities in global climate governance, having given an historic overview of climate governance, cities in climate governance and city research and after having introduced the strong cities in climate governance argument in more detail, it is now time to shift the attention to the establishment of an analytical framework that can guide the analysis of the interview results. Therefore, this section introduces ways in which cities can act in multi-level governance before these are used to construct the analytical framework in the following section.

First, we will look at how cities can behave with regard to other actors in the multi-level governance system, looking at the external dimension of urban governance, before looking at what cities can do within their own jurisdiction, thus looking at the internal dimension of urban governance.

3.4.1 External dimension of urban governance

The literature review has so far shown that urban governance does not occur in isolation. Instead, cities interact with other actors in the multi-level governance system (e.g. Bulkeley, 2010) that “shapes the institutional arrangements and specific political opportunity structure for cities” (Benz, Kemmerzell, Knodt, & Tews, 2015, p. 322).

One major group of actors in this regard are nation-states as these are the traditional actors in international relations. Johnson (2018) notes that on the one hand, “cities are clearly occupying spaces (e.g. attending international conferences, articulating foreign policy, setting international policy agendas) that have until recently been the exclusive domain of nation-states” (p. 148), on the other hand, Acuto and Rayner (2016) remind us that “city diplomacy is still deeply embedded in the Westphalian system” (p. 1151). Benz et al. state that local actors “are part of a European multi-level system that incorporates the local, regional, national and supranational levels. Within this vertical dimension, cities can be conceptualised as both passive implementers of national and European programmes and active players in multi-level governance” (Benz et al., 2015, p. 322). Cities can also engage in horizontal interactions with other cities in transnational municipal networks (e.g. Johnson, 2018).

Kern and Mol (2013) provide a useful tool that helps us classify these interactions. They classify external city engagement in what they call hierarchical climate governance, vertical climate governance and horizontal climate governance.

Hierarchical climate governance

For Kern and Mol (2013), hierarchical governance is a top-down process in which a nation-state implements national policies in order to comply with international agreements. “Instead of acting on their own initiative, local governments are regarded as policytakers that implement national programs” (Kern & Mol, 2013, p. 4). Kern and Mol write that the successful implementation of hierarchical governance requires the establishment of tools and guidelines for local governments to report on their progress. They add that hierarchical governance requires a highly interventionist state and that this type of governance will work better in centralised states than in states in which local governments enjoy a higher degree of autonomy. Kern & Mol make clear that in less-centralised states, “state-local relations are more cooperative, and the national government is in a considerably weaker position with regard to the implementation of climate change policy at local level” (2013, p. 6). Hierarchical governance suits the classification by Benz et al. (2015) of cities as passive implementers, especially as Kern and Mol note that the concept of hierarchical governance assumes, “at least implicitly, that subnational authorities do not become active beyond the nation-state and do not lobby European and international institutions. Instead, their lobbying activities are regarded as restricted to the national policy arenas” (2013, p. 8).

Vertical climate governance

Due to the shortcomings of hierarchical governance, Kern and Mol suggest that it needs to be complemented by a bottom-up approach that they call vertical climate governance (2013). “In vertical climate governance, local authorities develop their own initiatives and try to influence national and even global climate governance” (Kern & Mol, 2013, pp. 6-7). They write that vertical climate governance “is characterized by interdependency among governments at different levels, shared competencies, and joint decision-making” (2013, p. 7). The authors note that empirical evidence from the three leading European countries in climate policy, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Sweden, suggests that the simultaneous development of climate policies at the local and at the national level can improve a country’s performance in climate change mitigation. Kern and Mol state that in vertical governance, cities can try to engage directly with levels of decision-making that are beyond the national arena:

“When national governments relinquish their gatekeeper position, which allows subnational authorities to bypass the nation-state and develop their own foreign policy, the reality becomes more complex than a hierarchical climate governance model would suggest. These new opportunities have given rise to new strategies, and many regions and cities now search actively for direct access to international institutions.

Institutionalized forms of networking enable cities to pursue multilevel strategies. This development can be regarded as an expression of paradiplomacy, meaning that cities represent their interests independently from national governments” (2013, p. 9).

Kern and Mol explicitly include lobbying as mean to influence the international level directly as strategy that cities can apply in vertical climate governance (2013).

Horizontal climate governance

In horizontal governance, “cities cooperate directly in developing and implementing climate change policy through the establishment of transnational city networks, twinnings, and project networks” (Kern and Mol, 2013, p. 12). In such networks, cities exchange knowledge, spread best-practices and jointly develop solutions for common problems (Kern and Mol, 2013). They write that transnational networks have become “cogovernors at European and international levels [... and have created] transnational spaces beyond nation-states” (2013, pp. 10-11).

3.4.2 Internal dimension of urban governance

Cities as sites for experimentation and policy incubation

Bulkeley et al. (2015) argue that “central to the urban response to climate change is a mode of experimentation where municipalities, private and civil society actors seek to demonstrate, experience, learn and challenge what it might mean to respond to climate change through a multiplicity of interventions, projects and schemes” (pp. 4-5). Such examples can include for example cases of zero carbon housing, solar thermal heating and other low-carbon technologies (Johnson, 2018). Bulkeley et al. argue that experiments “need to be understood as situated and purposive interventions that demonstrate the ways in which new forms of authority are emerging in the context of climate change” (2015, p. 5).

Similarly, cities are seen as policy incubators for testing new approaches, documenting outcomes, sharing best practices and envisioning alternative policy scenarios (Anderton & Setzer, 2018; Boyko et al., 2012; Bulkeley et al., 2015). “Framed in this way, urban policy experiments provide an important means of challenging existing norms, practices, interests and investments that underlie ecologically destructive path dependencies” (Johnson, 2018, p. 8).

Cities can foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and encourage public participation

Betsill and Bulkeley note that “fostering relationships with relevant stakeholders [and] encouraging public participation” (2006, p. 143) is one of the approaches that cities can use to facilitate action by others.

Cities can adopt ambitious climate policies

Cities can adopt ambitious climate policies within their jurisdiction as a meaningful step in the fight against climate change (e.g. Kern & Mol, 2013).

3.5 Analytical framework

Based on the literature review, the following analytical framework was developed (see Figure 3-6). It is later used to guide the analysis of the data generated in the interviews with city representatives and to help answer the research questions.

The underlying assumption of the analytical framework is that city engagement takes place in a multi-level governance system, which is represented by the playing field that is opened by the two axes of the diagram. In the vertical dimension, the city finds itself above citizens, businesses and organisations and below the nation-state, the EU, and the international level. In the horizontal dimension, the city finds itself next to other cities and city networks, which is abbreviated here by 'city networks'. Bulkeley (2010) tells us that urban climate governance is situated "at the interface of horizontal networked forms of authority and vertical divisions of responsibilities among different parts of the state" (p. 237).

Kern & Mol (2013) provide us with a simple yet effective way to help us understand cities' interactions with other actors in the multi-level governance system. In the vertical dimension, they can act as 'passive implementers' (Benz et al., 2015) of national policies in a top-down sense of hierarchical governance (illustrated by a downward pointing arrow) or they can act as 'active players in their own right' (Benz et al., 2015), influencing the national government as well as actors on higher levels of decision-making in what Kern & Mol call vertical governance (illustrated by an upward pointing arrow). In the horizontal dimension, cities can interact with other cities in city networks in what Kern & Mol call horizontal governance (illustrated by a double-sided, horizontal arrow).

The literature review also provided ideas on what we can expect the cities to do internally, meaning within their own jurisdictions. They can adopt ambitious climate policies (Kern & Mol, 2013), they can be sites for experimentation and policy incubation (Bulkeley et al., 2015) and they can foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and can encourage public participation (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006).

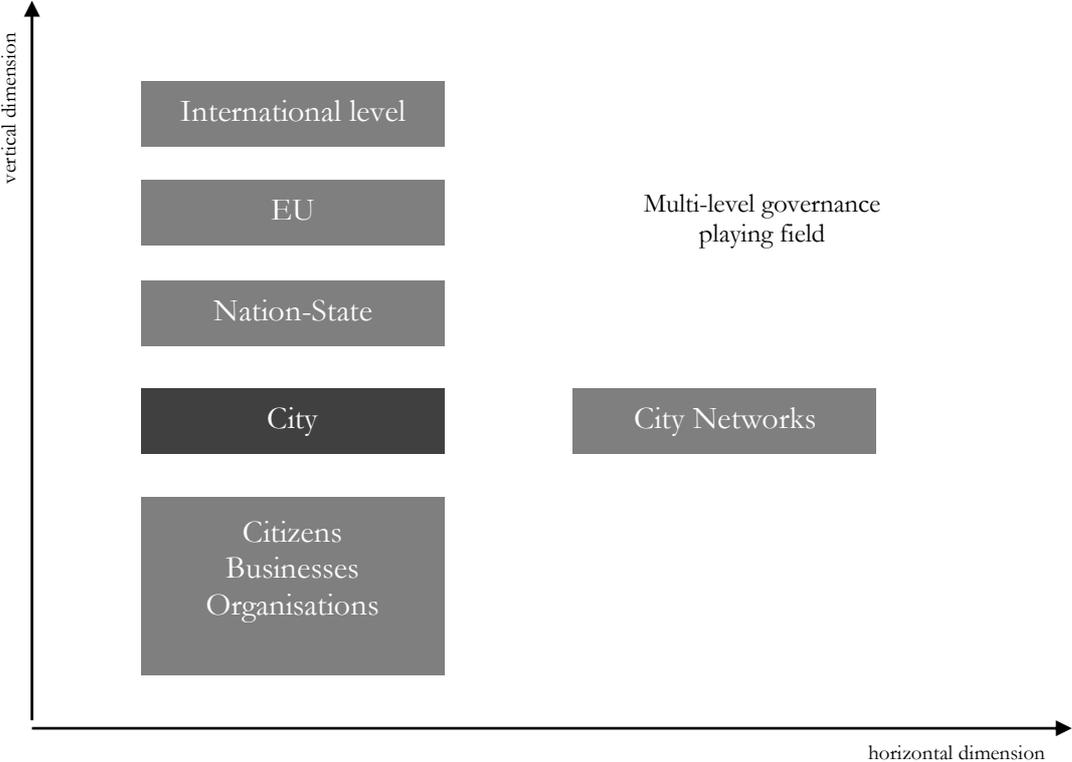
The analytical framework's role is two-fold. It first provides a playing field (multi-level governance) in which city engagement can be understood and it secondly provides ideas on how the city can act within this playing field as described above through the three modes of external interaction and the three modes of internal action. Altogether, the analytical framework provides theoretical guidelines in which the analysis of the interview data can take place. It guides our view to certain aspects of city behaviour: Does the city only see itself as passive implementer of national policies or does it also engage in vertical governance and if yes, to what extent does it have a strategy for this? Does its vertical governance end with trying to influence the national government or does the city have ambitions to also influence higher levels of decision-making? Is the city active in city networks and if yes with what aim? Does it have ambitious climate policies in place? Does it act as site for experimentation and policy incubation? Does it foster relationships with relevant stakeholders, and does it encourage public participation?

As it is the aim of this thesis to investigate how the cities under investigation understand their own role in climate governance, it will be interesting to see on what elements of city engagement the interviewees put the emphasis: Is it more on internal actions or external interactions? Is it on horizontal governance or vertical governance? It will be interesting to compare the results from the three cities and to look for common features as well as differences. Finally, it will be interesting to lift the results from this investigation (that we can

call the German context) to a higher level and to compare them with the example of US cities and the strong cities in climate governance argument in general.

It needs to be noted that due to the explorative style of this research, the analytical framework might not be able to capture the statements made by the interviewees to a full extent. It might be that the interviewees describe the role of their cities in ways that transcend the categories of the framework. This is well anticipated. Should this occur, it is also the aim of this thesis to make adjustments to the analytical framework, so it will be better suited for future analyses.

Analytical Framework



External Dimension



Internal Dimension

1. The city as actor to introduce ambitious climate policies.
2. The city as site to foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and to encourage public participation.
3. The city as site for experimentation and policy incubation.

Figure 3-2: Analytical framework

Source: Multi-level governance playing field adapted from Marks et al., 1996; Bulkeley, 2010. External dimension adapted from Kern & Mol, 2013. internal Dimension adapted from Bulkeley et al., 2015; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Kern & Mol, 2013.

4 Results

In this chapter, the results of the interviews with city representatives from Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich are presented. The results are presented city by city and each city as well as its overall climate goals is introduced briefly. The comparison and analysis of the results is conducted in the following chapter. Readers that are not interested in an in-depth presentation of the interviewees' statements might decide to skip the results chapter and jump directly to the analysis.

All interviews were conducted in German but the results (including direct quotes from the interviews) are presented in English, in which case they were translated by the author. The German originals of direct quotes can be found as footnotes at the bottom of the pages. In this chapter, formal referencing after each sentence is omitted. When information is presented that is not based on the interviews with city representatives, normal referencing is used. See the introduction for each city for a list of interviewees.

The presentation of the results is structured according to the three themes below. Each of the themes forms an umbrella under which the replies to a number of questions are presented (see Annex A for a complete list of the interview questions in English or Annex B for the German original). The themes follow the structure of the interview and range from general questions about the role of the city in the fight against climate change to more specific ones on multi-level governance and the strong cities in climate governance argument.

1. Organising the fight against climate change and the role of the city

Under the first theme, the interviewees' answers to two questions are presented: 1) Whose responsibility is it to organise and lead the fight against climate change? 2) What is the city's role in the fight against climate change in general terms? The questions were asked in the beginning of the interview to capture the interviewees' opinion without steering their answers into a certain direction. The answers under this theme thus let us observe how the interviewees see the role of their city in general terms and where they put the emphasis when being asked open questions.

2. The city in multi-level climate governance

Under the second theme, the interviewees' answers to three questions are presented: 1) What is the city's role in the fight against climate change with regard to the role of the national government? 2) Does the city try to influence other actors? 3) Does the city play a role in global climate governance? These questions, that are narrower compared to those in the first theme, were asked to make the interviewees describe how their city behaves in the multi-level governance system.

3. The strong cities in climate governance argument

Under the third theme, the interviewees' answers with regard to questions on the strong cities in climate governance argument are presented. The interviewees were asked if they are aware of the argument, if it influences their work and if they agree or disagree with it. They were then asked if, based on the assumption that cities do play a more and more important role in global climate governance, they could see any consequences of this development. Finally, they were asked if they would like their cities and cities in general to have a stronger voice in global climate governance.

4.1 Berlin

Berlin is a city-state and the capital of Germany. With its 3.6 million inhabitants (6.1 million in the metropolitan area), it is Germany's most populous city. Berlin is currently governed by a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Green Party (Die Grünen), and the Left-Wing Party (Die Linke). The mayor is Michael Müller from the Social Democratic Party. The Senate Department for the Environment, Transport and Climate Protection is run by the Green Party.

Climate goals

Table 4-1: Berlin's GHG emissions reduction goals (all with a 1990 baseline)

2020	reduce by at least 40%
2030	reduce by at least 60%
2050	reduce by at least 85%

Source: (Senatsverwaltung für Umwelt, Verkehr und Klimaschutz, n.d.)

In order to achieve these goals, a new strategic orientation of Berlin's energy and climate protection policy was introduced (the BEK, Berliner Energie- und Klimaschutzprogramm 2030), for which the Berlin Energy Transition Act, which came into force on 6 April 2016, provides the legal framework.

Interviewees

1. Thomas Honeck (interview on the 21st of June 2019)
Honeck works in the Department for EU and International Affairs within the Senate Department for the Environment, Transport and Climate Protection. He is responsible international networks and the city network Metropolis.
2. Dr. Stefan Niederhafner (interview on the 17th of April 2019)
Niederhafner is the Head of the Working Group International Affairs of Climate Action and Funding within the Senate Department for the Environment, Transport and Climate Protection.

4.1.1 Organising the fight against climate change and the role of the city

Whose responsibility is it to organise and lead the fight against climate change?

Both Honeck and Niederhafner state that the fight against climate change is a shared responsibility. Niederhafner says that neither Berlin as city, nor the national level, nor politics in general, nor industry can solve the issue on their own. According to him, all levels of government, municipalities, regions, the national government as well as the European and international level need to work together. He emphasises that one should not only look at the issue in a hierarchical way but should instead also think horizontally. According to Niederhafner it is important to include various societal actors and not least consumers to solve the problem. Honeck states that one actor can only do his work successfully when the other actors are also successful, emphasising the importance of cooperation.

Berlin's role in the fight against climate change

Niederhafner states that Berlin plays a major role in the fight against climate change. He emphasises Berlin's role as implementer of policies: "We can decide at the national level for another 100 years that the climate protection target is to be achieved, that this and that has to be implemented, that the CO2 reductions are to be achieved, but if no one then does it, then all of this is useless".³ He states that Germany will miss its climate goals for 2020. Due to that shortcoming, cities according to Niederhafner receive more attention now as they are the level of government that can actually implement policies and take action.

Honeck states that Berlin as German capital and the most populous city in Germany has a special responsibility. He says that Germany, not least due to its energy transition, receives a lot of attention, which in turn leads to Berlin also getting exposure. Honeck states that Berlin has symbolic power not only within Germany but also extending to Europe and the rest of the world.

Honeck adds that while Berlin is not a strong industrial location, it is a hub for knowledge, universities, start-ups and those play an important role when it comes to climate change. He says that Berlin might also play a special role when it comes to defining modern urban lifestyles in the context of climate change.

4.1.2 The city in multi-level climate governance

Berlin's role in the fight against climate change with regard to the role of the national government

Niederhafner states that in some regards, Berlin is more ambitious than the national government, while it lacks behind in others. He gives the example that Berlin's mitigation target for 2050 is an 85 percent reduction compared to 1990, which as he states is not Paris-compatible. The goal of the national government in comparison is a reduction by at least 80-95 percent. On the other hand, Niederhafner gives the example that Berlin has already adopted a law on a coal phase-out in 2016 while this is still being negotiated at the national level. He states that "that would be a very nice example of how Berlin goes beyond the national requirements and conducts politics independently".⁴

Honeck argues that the national level is very important when it comes to negotiating policies. Cities on the other hand are very important when it comes to turning policies into action. Due to it being the capital, Berlin has special ties to the national government, says Honeck. He explains that delegations that come to meet with the national government in Berlin would often take the opportunity to also look at Berlin's municipal actions.

Niederhafner adds that there is a major difference between Berlin and the national government as Berlin is in more direct contact with citizens. He says that there is more institutionalised exchange between citizens and the local government, and they of course take it into account when their citizens demand for more climate action.

³ German original: "Wir können auf nationalstaatlicher Ebene noch 100 Jahre lang beschließen, dass das Klimaschutzziel erreicht werden soll, dass das und das umgesetzt werden soll, dass die und die CO2-Minderungen erreicht werden sollen, aber wenn es dann keiner macht, dann bringt das alles nichts" (Niederhafner).

⁴ German original: "das wäre ein sehr schönes Beispiel, wie Berlin über die nationalstaatliche Zielsetzung hinausgeht und eigenständig Politik macht" (Niederhafner).

Does Berlin try to influence other actors?

Niederhafner states explicitly that Berlin tries to influence other actors. He says that Berlin, being a city-state, has special constitutional rights compared to other cities and can use its role as state to influence the national government via the Bundesrat, the second chamber of the German parliament, in which all 16 German states are represented. He says that Berlin was very active using this approach and tried to push the national government towards setting an end to coal-based electricity generation.

Niederhafner says that Berlin also influences actors at the international level: “And of course we are also active on an international level, in Europe or at other meetings – I refer to the city networks in this regard. Representatives of the City of Berlin stand for progressive positions at those meetings”.⁵

Honeck states that he perceives Berlin to be relatively cautious at the international level, cautious when it comes to making pledges. However, once Berlin has pledged to do something, it also delivers. From his personal point of view, Honeck says that Berlin could be more ambitious: “I think sometimes you have to send a political message or push forward politically”.⁶

Honeck states that he thinks Berlin has a good reputation and is widely acknowledged when it comes to climate action. Asked if he thinks that that reputation leads to Berlin influencing nation-states he says: “I don’t think so. That would be a bit far-fetched. Maybe Berlin influences other cities and via that route also has an influence on nation-states, that could be possible”.⁷

Honeck mentions that cities, including major cities like New York, are interested in Berlin’s policy approaches. He adds that Berlin often receives requests from delegations from Asian countries that want to look at demonstration projects and that want to meet politicians to share insights about their work.

Honeck states that his team is currently developing a new strategic approach ‘EU and international affairs’ and one of the strategic areas is the shaping of international and European policies: “We are thinking very specifically about how we can exert greater influence on certain issues [that affect the Ministry of the Environment in Berlin], of course, European legislation is now much more important for our day-to-day work than national legislation.”⁸

Berlin’s role in global climate governance

Niederhafner says that Berlin plays a role in global climate governance, especially through city networks. He says, in addition to the work in city networks, Berlin is very innovative in certain regards and sets standards, one example being its coal phase-out.

⁵ German original: “Und wir sind natürlich dann auch, da verweise ich auf die Städtenetzwerke, auf internationaler Ebene, in Europa oder bei anderen Treffen, aktiv. Repräsentanten von Berlin vertreten da progressive Positionen” (Niederhafner).

⁶ German original: „Ich glaube manchmal muss man auch eine politische Message setzen oder politisch ein bisschen nach vorne drängen“ (Honeck).

⁷ German original: “Das glaube ich nicht. Das wäre ein bisschen weit gedacht. Ich glaube dann eher noch über Bande, auf andere Städte und dann von da aus auf Nationalstaaten. Das kann natürlich sein” (Honeck).

⁸ German original: "Da überlegen wir uns eben ganz konkret, wie kann man stärkeren Einfluss nehmen auf bestimmte Themenfelder, die unser Haus da betreffen, weil natürlich die europäische Gesetzgebung mittlerweile deutlich wichtiger für unsere alltägliche Arbeit ist, als die nationale" (Honeck).

Niederhafner states that Berlin tries to be a role model for its citizens when it comes to climate action and says that this function extends to other German cities, too, as well as to cities around the globe: “As city we are of course also a bit of a role model for other German cities, or at least we imagine this in Berlin, and in the end of course also on a global scale”.⁹ He states that Berlin might not perceive itself as being a rich city within the German context “but if you look at it globally, we are the capital of the Federal Republic and of course many other large cities are observing what is done and achieved in the rich countries and in this respect we want to take on a role model role as best we can.”¹⁰

Honeck says that Berlin definitely plays a role in global climate governance. He states that Berlin is part of many city networks, is very active in working groups and was also part of the C40 steering committee.

Honeck states that in his work he and his team are committed to pushing the role of cities in traditional international institutions. That includes voicing the perspective and needs of cities at meetings that until recently were reserved for nation-states only such as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York where the Mayor of Berlin gave a speech in front of representatives of nation-states.

4.1.3 The strong cities in climate governance argument

Are the interviewees aware of the strong cities in climate argument and does it influence their work?

Niederhafner states that during his academic career, he was one of the people that established the strong cities in climate governance argument. He says that the argument definitely influences his work: “Personally, it does affect me, yes. I think that cities play a major role here and, of course, the less the national level achieves, the more important the role of cities becomes.”¹¹ Niederhafner says that cities feel the impacts of climate change before the national governments feels them and that is why they might act quicker than many nation-states.

Do the interviewees agree or disagree with the argument that cities become more and more important in global climate governance and might even be leading nation-states?

Niederhafner says that he generally agrees with the argument that cities become more and more important in global climate governance, but he adds that that might not be true all across the globe. He states that it is definitely true for cities across Europe that start to emancipate themselves and start building their own capacities. According to Niederhafner, cities today claim the right for themselves to be included in debates and negotiations at the international level. He gives the example of cities being represented at the G20 Summit in Osaka or that city participation has meanwhile become the norm at COPs.

⁹ German original: "Wir sind als Stadt natürlich auch ein bisschen Vorbild für andere deutsche Städte, oder zumindest bilden wir uns das ein in Berlin, und am Schluss natürlich auch noch global gesehen" (Niederhafner).

¹⁰ German original: "aber wenn man das global sieht, sind wir die Hauptstadt der Bundesrepublik und natürlich von vielen anderen großen Städten wird schon beobachtet, was man in den reichen Ländern macht und leistet und insofern wollen wir auch da eben eine Vorbildrolle einnehmen so gut wir können" (Niederhafner).

¹¹ German original: "Mich persönlich beeinflusst das durchaus, ja. Ich finde, dass Städte da eine große Rolle spielen und natürlich insbesondere je weniger die nationalstaatliche Ebene zustande bringt, umso stärker wird natürlich, umso wichtiger wird die Rolle von Städten" (Niederhafner).

Would the interviewees like their city and cities in general to have a stronger voice in global climate governance? How do the interviewees analyse the current developments around cities in global climate governance?

“In general, everyone thinks that he should have more to say”,¹² says Niederhafner and adds that cities would not complain if new institutionalised opportunities for their participation in global climate governance were created. He however makes us consider that it will get even more difficult to reach agreements at the international level, should even more actors be involved in the decision-making and that it is simply not likely that nation-states would agree to a reform of international institution in which they would lose power. He sees it as a feasible option that the voices of cities are heard before nation-states make decisions at the international level, for example at the COPs.

Honeck is of the opinion that the involvement of cities in global climate governance needs to be institutionalised a lot more. He states that international institutions should become significantly more multilateral and that cities should have a stronger voice in those institutions. According to Honeck, we are witnessing a systemic change at the moment and systemic changes always bear a potential for conflicts as one side fears that it could lose influence and power and thus wants to delay the process while the other side wants to speed up the process. Honeck argues that in the current transition phase, city networks play a vital role in making the voice of cities heard at the international level. Cities should join forces in those networks but should also include other actors from the science community and the civil society to put pressure on the existing regime.

Honeck sees a clear advantage, would cities be included in international decision-making: cities could help identify issues a lot clearer than nation-states can and their participation could also lead to the development of better solutions. In his opinion, the current system in which nation-states act as filters between international decision-making and the actual implementation level is sub-optimal.

Honeck argues that we are currently witnessing a systemic change and mentions two indicators. First, cities are present at conferences at the international level that were previously reserved for nation-states, which Niederhafner also mentioned. Second, he sees a shift in the way the international community is thinking about the role of cities. He states that the SDGs for example have one goal that is entirely dedicated to cities, but the awareness is spreading that cities are crucial for reaching all SDGs, not only the one on cities as they are the implementation level and they have close ties to citizens, science and businesses.

Niederhafner states that the international level is characterised by the “exclusivity of the nation-state level and that excludes the participation of cities at many levels, but I think that in the long term this simply makes no sense in some areas.”¹³

Niederhafner adds some thoughts on the differences between the US and Germany. He states that the political system in the US is characterised by competition and confrontation while the German system is characterised by consensus-finding. He says that it is important in the German system to include the opinion of your political opponents when making decisions.

¹² German original: “Generell findet ja jeder, dass er mehr zu sagen haben sollte” (Niederhafner).

¹³ German original: “Auf internationaler Ebene gibt es eben diese Exklusivität der nationalstaatlichen Ebene und das schließt eben die Beteiligung von Städten an vielen Ebenen aus, aber ich denke mir, dass das langfristig in manchen Bereichen einfach keinen Sinn macht” (Niederhafner).

This difference might explain why for example a mayor belonging to the Democratic Party goes into strong opposition to President Trump while we do not see such confrontations in Germany. He emphasises however that the political culture can only partly explain city engagement. He says that in general, cities would become more active, the more pressing the issues are and the less is done by the national government.

4.2 Hamburg

The city of Hamburg is a city-state in northern Germany and the second most populous city in Germany with 1.8 million inhabitants (5.3 million in the metropolitan area). It is led by a coalition of the Social Democratic (SPD) and the Green Party (Die Grüne). Dr. Peter Tschentscher is the social-democratic mayor. The Ministry of the Environment and Energy is run by the Green Party.

Climate goals

Table 4-2: Hamburg's GHG emissions reduction goals (all with a 1990 baseline)

2020	save about 2 million tCO ₂ compared to 2012
2030	reduce by at least 50%
2050	reduce by at least 80%

Source: (*Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2015*)

These goals are less ambitious than the goals of the national government. Hamburg's Minister of the Environment and Energy, Jens Kerstan, demanded in a newspaper interview in 2019 to raise the ambition of the goals (WELT, 2019).

Interviewees

1. Cordelia Koenig (interview on the 30th of April 2019)
Koenig works in the Leitstelle Klima within the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. The Leitstelle Klima is responsible for developing Hamburg's climate strategy. Koenig is responsible for the topics energy and industry as well as green economy and international affairs.
2. Wolfgang Michael Pollman (interview on the 2nd of May 2019)
Pollmann is Staatsrat (the highest political officer) in the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. He leads the Ministry under the Minister Jens Kerstan.
3. Anselm Sprandel (interview on the 10th of May 2019)
Sprandel heads the Office for Climate and Energy, a sub-division of the Ministry of the Environment and Energy.

4.2.1 Organising the fight against climate change and the role of the city

Whose responsibility is it to organise and lead the fight against climate change?

Sprandel presents a three-step answer. On one end he says is the international level that is very important for negotiations and goal-setting, especially as climate change is a global issue, on the other end is the municipal level that brings action to the ground: "We need to increase

building efficiency on the ground, we need to change local energy production, we need to promote technology and innovation in local businesses. If we want to replace the large coal power plants with renewable energies, then we need local grids into which local sources can be fed – and that can only be done locally” (Sprandel, 05:45).¹⁴ In between those two levels is the nation-state that implements EU policies, that makes international agreements and that can tackle topics like the energy transition that a municipality alone cannot tackle, says Sprandel. He emphasises that the interplay between the different levels of decision-making is very important.

Pollmann agrees with the view that we will not solve the climate issue if the different levels from the individual to the global community do not work together. Pollmann says that while some think the biggest responsibility would lie with the individual, he is convinced that we need the right political guidelines to achieve a change. He sees the national as well as the EU level as the most important levels in this regard.

Koenig sees the main responsibility with nation-states as these have the means to influence all actors on their territory. She says that cities also have a responsibility as these know better than the nation-state how to engage with the specific actors in their city.

Hamburg’s role in the fight against climate change

According to Pollmann, Hamburg has been claiming „a very active role“¹⁵ in the fight against climate change. He refers to the goal to half the emissions by 2030 and to reduce them by 80 to 95 percent by 2050. Sprandel defines Hamburg’s role as follows: “For a number of years now, Hamburg has had the ambition to contribute to the achievement of national and European climate goals and, if possible, to go beyond them.”¹⁶

Koenig says that Hamburg started early to engage with the topic of climate change because it acknowledged its big responsibility as industrial city that has a huge port and raw materials industry. She states that some companies in Hamburg produce GHG emissions that compare to the emissions of entire cities and that made them realise early on that they had to do something. She adds that Hamburg wants to remain a city worth living in and that it has a responsibility towards its citizens but also on a global scale, being Germany’s second most populous city, being relatively wealthy and a being a major industrial site.

4.2.2 The city in multi-level climate governance

Hamburg’s role in the fight against climate change with regard to the role of the national government

Pollmann says that Hamburg’s official position is that it “supports the federal government in its efforts” and that that is also why Hamburg has not adopted goals that are more ambitious than those of the federal government. He points at a difference of opinions within the city

¹⁴ German original: “Wir müssen die Gebäudeeffizienz vor Ort erhöhen, wir müssen die Energieerzeugungsanlagen vor Ort verändern, wir müssen Technologie und Innovation in den Unternehmen vor Ort fördern, wenn wir beispielsweise die großen Kohleleiler ersetzen wollen durch erneuerbare Energien, dann brauchen wir lokale Netze, in die lokale Quellen eingespeist werden können – das kann man nur vor Ort lösen“ (Sprandel).

¹⁵ German original: „eine sehr aktive Rolle“ (Pollmann).

¹⁶ German original: “Hamburg hat schon seit einer Reihe von Jahren den Ehrgeiz, seinen Beitrag zum Erreichen der nationalen und der europäischen Klimaziele beizutragen und nach Möglichkeit auch darüber hinauszugehen“ (Sprandel).

government. He states that it is the official position of the City of Hamburg that it is not possible to apply the federal reduction goals equally to every region within Germany, and that cities like Hamburg that are growing and that are major industrial sites have a harder time achieving emissions reductions than other regions in Germany. He states that the Ministry of the Environment backs this argumentation as it is loyal to the city government but adds that one could also argue that Hamburg, especially because it is a major industrial site, should make a special contribution.

Both Sprandel and Koenig uses the same narrative and state that Hamburg has to do its part in making the energy transition a success and achieving the national climate goals. They both add that it is also Hamburg's role as city-state to ensure that the national government's climate and energy policies are driven forward and become more ambitious.

Sprandel states that the national government establishes policy frameworks that do not change anything by themselves. It is Hamburg's role to fill these frameworks with concrete action. Asked if he thinks that the national climate goals are sufficient, Sprandel states: "They are not sufficient, and they are not reached even in this inadequate form. So, in twofold view not sufficient."¹⁷

Koenig adds that she observes a give and take between Hamburg and the national government. Both are interested in the other party's work and implement their policies that have proven to be successful.

Does Hamburg try to influence other actors?

Sprandel says that Hamburg definitely tries to influence other actors according to its needs. He gives the example of Hamburg trying to improve the environmental performance of its port by requiring ships to use electricity from the grid while they are in the port instead of running their engines. He says that while Hamburg could simply introduce this policy on its own, this might lead to a competitive disadvantage and ships might simply use other European ports instead. Thus, Hamburg is using its influence on the national government to in turn use its influence at the European level to ensure that a European regulation is established for this issue.

All three interviewees emphasise that the special constitutional rights it has as a federal state are very important: "Hamburg is involved in many committees and organizations and discussion contexts that also go beyond Germany [...] but ultimately for Hamburg the possibilities that it has as a federal state are very important", says Sprandel.¹⁸ Sprandel says that Hamburg for example, among other federal states, tries to make the national government adopt the 95 percent goal for 2050 and thus tries to make the national climate goals more ambitious.

Pollman again points out that there are different interests within the city government when it comes to lobbying the national government: "However, one must also say that one can again differentiate between what the individual departments do in Hamburg. While, for example, we

¹⁷ German original: "Sie sind nicht ausreichend und sie werden auch in dieser nichtausreichenden Form nicht erreicht. Also in zweifacher Sicht nicht ausreichend" (Sprandel).

¹⁸ German original: "Hamburg ist in vielen Gremien und Organisationen und Gesprächszusammenhängen drin, die auch über Deutschland hinausgehen [...] aber letztlich für Hamburg sind schon die Möglichkeiten sehr wichtig, die es als Bundesstaat hat" (Sprandel).

had called on the Federal Government to advocate more ambitious limit values for motor vehicle fleets in Brussels, our Ministry of Transport has explicitly taken the opposite position.”¹⁹

Koenig adds that Hamburg’s Ministry of the Environment also gives input to environmental decisions taken at the EU level. The ambition to shape EU policies according to Hamburg’s needs can also be found in a press statement by the city’s government: “Hamburg’s success is inextricably linked to European integration. [...] We want to shape Europe in Hamburg’s interests” (City of Hamburg, 2013, paragraph 2).

Hamburg’s role in global climate governance

Sprandel states that Hamburg is very active at international city conferences and, as mentioned before, uses its role as federal state to take part in the national as well as EU goal-setting.

Pollmann says that he believes that Hamburg receives attention on a global level. He mentions Hamburg having been the EU’s Environmental Capital of the Year, which gave it exposure. He doesn’t want to claim that Hamburg is great in all regards, but he says that Hamburg has good initiatives in some regards and that others recognise that.

Koenig says she also believes that Hamburg plays a role in global climate governance, not least because Germany is in the spotlight with regards to climate action and due to that, both Berlin and Hamburg also get exposure. She states that city networks often reach out to Hamburg and ask for its participation in initiatives.

Sprandel argues that the nation-states in the EU, by giving sovereignty to higher levels of decision making, created a vacuum that cities now try to fill to a certain extent. Citizens were used to being able to shape national policy debates but as the decision-making level moved further away from the citizens, they now often seek to engage with cities instead of the national governments, which in turn leads to cities getting a more important role in global governance.

Koenig reports that Hamburg is part of the U20, a group of cities that bring a city voice to the G20. She says that this is a good example for how Hamburg tries to influence national actors and plays a role in global climate governance.

4.2.3 The strong cities in climate governance argument

Are the interviewees aware of the strong cities in climate argument and does it influence their work?

"Of course, I am aware of that", says Koenig, "especially the US example you mentioned at the beginning, that is almost the most prominent example, the US itself is pulling out [of the Paris Agreement], but California [...] and of course many cities are active and a lot happens

¹⁹ German original: "Da muss man allerdings auch sagen, da kann man wieder differenzieren zwischen dem, was die einzelnen Ressorts in Hamburg tun. Während wir beispielsweise von der Bundesregierung gefordert hatten, sich für ehrgeizigere Grenzwerte bei den Kfz-Flotten in Brüssel einzusetzen, hat unser Verkehrsministerium, unsere Verkehrsbehörde, ausdrücklich eine gegenteilige Position eingenommen" (Pollmann).

locally. I think it is more noticeable there than in Germany, because we are working together and are headed for the same direction."²⁰

Do the interviewees agree or disagree with the argument that cities become more and more important in global climate governance and might even be leading nation-states?

“I agree with the argument that cities rightfully emphasise their responsibility and their willingness to make contributions and to not shift everything to the respective federal or national level, but I do not really agree with the argument that cities can now largely handle climate action themselves”, says Pollmann.²¹

Pollmann talks about policy domains like energy in which it is hard for municipalities to take action without the national level providing the right guidelines. "And these are things that are a hard nut to crack for cities and towns. There is simply a need for changed frameworks at, in this case, our national level. But if the cities stand together and fight for it, they are of course also drivers. City engagement is just not, or only to a limited extent, a substitute for action by the nation-state", says Pollmann.²²

Koenig states that one can observe that the role of cities is becoming more important in the US and she simply hopes that that is also a global trend, but she has a hard time knowing that for sure. She says she hopes that cities and nation-states all around the world will engage more in a give and take as it is the case in Germany and that the voice and ideas of cities will be appreciated instead of seeing cities only as implementer of national policies.

Sprandel argues that cities are drivers of climate action but not because they network internationally – he calls that a “sideshow”²³ – but because they are the points of contact for citizens and because they are the ones that have to produce action on the ground. Sprandel argues that the nation-state is still very important and that we need that level of decision-making. He says that it is the nation-state that implements EU law, that is the national sovereign that can sign international agreements and that can tackle major policy projects like the energy transition. He says that the German Federal Government has been successful with these projects in the past decades and that is why he does not agree with the argument the nation-state decreases in importance.

²⁰ German original: "Ich bekomme das natürlich mit, klar. Gerade das Beispiel, das Sie eingangs genannt haben in Richtung USA, das ist ja schon fast das prominenteste Beispiel, die USA steigt selbst aus, aber Kalifornien [...] und ganze viele Städte natürlich sind aktiv und es passiert auch viel vor Ort. Ich glaube da merkt man es mehr als bei uns in Deutschland, weil wir quasi am gleichen Strang ziehen" (Koenig).

²¹ German original: "Ich halte schon viel von der These, dass Städte richtigerweise ihre Eigenverantwortung und ihre Bereitschaft, Beiträge zu leisten, deutlich machen und nicht alles auf die jeweilige Bundes- oder Nationalstaatsebene abschieben, ich halte aber nicht viel von der These, dass Städte jetzt den Klimaschutz weitgehend selbst stemmen können" (Pollmann).

²² German original: "Und das sind Sachen, da können sich die Städte und Gemeinden die Zähne dran ausbeißen. Da bedarf es einfach veränderter Rahmensetzungen auf, in dem Fall, unserer nationalstaatlichen Ebene. Aber wenn die Städte gemeinsam dafür kämpfen, sind sie natürlich auch Motor auf diesem Weg. Es ist bloß keine, oder nur in begrenztem Umfang, eine Ersatzvornahme" (Pollmann).

²³ German original: „Begleitmusik“ (Sprandel).

Would the interviewees like their city and cities in general to have a stronger voice in global climate governance? How do the interviewees analyse the current developments around cities in global climate governance?

Pollman says that he does not want to complain and does not want to ask for more institutionalised opportunities for city involvement in international decision-making as and increasing the number of actors involved would make it even harder to find common ground and to reach agreements. On the other hand, he thinks that it makes sense that cities give input to the negotiations of nation-states at the international level as it is already happening in some instances today. Looking at Germany, he says that the constitutional rights of cities and federal states to give input are sufficient. He would wish that the climate agenda of the national government was more ambitious but similar to the international level, he does not want to ask for more institutionalised involvement of cities as that would only make even harder to reach agreements.

Sprandel says that this is a tricky question and he thinks about it for some time. He says that the interplay between different levels of policy-making in the EU existed for a long time and he does not think that it is about to change: "I believe that in Germany the federal system is quite reasonably balanced. We are still a state and a country and there has to be some sort of binding national legislation and government, you can't just erode that by handing over competences downwards."²⁴ I confronted Sprandel with Bloomberg's demand that his coalition of cities could take part in the official UNFCCC negotiations. I asked Sprandel if he sees such a need for German cities. He clearly says no. He is of the opinion that the German system in which cities voice their ideas towards the national government that then represents the cities at the international level is working, he says there is no need to take shortcuts and bypass the national government. He says that we need change in climate governance but believes that this change is fuelled by the increased exposure that the climate topics gets and the increased interest and acceptance amongst the population (Sprandel, 20:10).

Pollmann also stresses the importance of cities engaging with their citizens. Cities can for example develop climate strategies for individual city districts in cooperation with active citizens. Pollmann says that such activities are becoming more and more important and bring the opportunity with them to advance the debate around climate change, increase the awareness amongst the population to eventually create the right political preconditions or the right political climate that allows the national government to create the needed policy framework to make the fight against climate change a success.

"The leeway for cities [to adopt ambitious policies], but certainly also for the federal states and to a certain extent of course also for nation-states, depend crucially on how a public discussion is conducted. And what now offers us greater leeway are currently movements such as Fridays for Future and that is why I believe it is an important function for cities to promote the dialogue with the civil society and such movements, because this will lead to better opportunities for the implementation of climate action", says Pollmann.²⁵

²⁴ German original: "Ich glaube das ist in Deutschland ganz vernünftig ausgewogen, das föderale System. Wir sind immer noch ein Staat und ein Land und da muss es eine einigermaßen verbindliche nationale Gesetzgebung und Regierung geben, das kann man nicht beliebig aushölen durch Abgabe von Kompetenzen nach unten" (Sprandel).

²⁵ German original: "Die Handlungsmöglichkeiten für Städte [um ambitionierte Klimapolitik zu verabschieden], aber sicherlich auch für Länder und in gewissem Umfang natürlich auch für Nationalstaaten, hängen ganz entscheidend davon ab, wie einer Diskussion in der Öffentlichkeit geführt wird. Und das, was uns jetzt größere Handlungsmöglichkeiten eröffnet, das ist aktuell so eine Bewegung wie Fridays for Future und deswegen glaube ich ist es für die Städte eine

Koenig says she could imagine that the involvement of cities in international decision-making could be strengthened at some point in the future, but she says she lacks the inspiration to imagine what that might look like in practice.

Sprandel says that he spent some time in the US and observed that their federal system works differently than the German system. He says that in the US, there is in parts strong confrontation and disloyalty between the different political levels that are not comparable with German standards. In Germany, he says, the federal system relies heavily on cooperation and consensus-finding.

Koenig states that the German political system does not have such a confrontational style as the US system. She states that many ministries in different levels of German government are run by the green party and it is great that they all work together and even though the environmental ministry at the national level is not run by the green party but by the social democratic party, she praises its work and says that it is “a very active Ministry of the Environment and has been doing so for years, you simply have to say that”.²⁶

4.3 Munich

Munich is a city in southern Germany. It has 1.45 million inhabitants (6 million in the metropolitan area) and is Germany’s third largest city after Berlin and Hamburg. Other than Berlin and Hamburg, Munich is not a city-state and does not enjoy the same constitutional rights. Munich is governed by a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Social Union (CSU). Dieter Reiter is the social-democratic head mayor. The Department for Environment and Health is led by the independent Stephanie Jacobs.

Climate goals

Table 4-3: Munich’s GHG emissions reduction goals

2030	emissions of max 3 tonnes of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e) per inhabitant
2050	climate neutrality (emissions of max 0.3 tCO2e per inhabitant)

Source: (Stadtrat der Stadt München, 2017)

Munich updated its climate goals in 2017. It writes that the updated climate goals are based on the “maximum” (Stadtrat der Stadt München, 2017, p. 8) mitigation goals of the federal government. The city adopts a new integrated action programme climate protection (German original: Integriertes Handlungsprogramm Klimaschutz) every three years to turn its goals into action. The current action programme was adopted in 2019 and is valid until 2021. Instead of using relative reduction targets compared to 1990 as most cities and nation-states do, Munich states its reduction targets in tCO2e per inhabitant.

wichtige Funktion, den Dialog mit der Zivilgesellschaft und solchen Bewegungen zu fördern, weil sich daraus insgesamt bessere Umsetzungsmöglichkeiten für Klimaschutz ableiten“ (Pollmann).

²⁶ German original: "ein sehr aktives Umweltministerium und das schon seit Jahren, das muss man einfach sagen" (Koenig).

Interviewee

Andreas Bauer (interview on the 7th of May 2019)

Bauer heads the Division of Climate and Energy within the Department for Environment and Health.

4.3.1 Organising the fight against climate change and the role of the city

Whose responsibility is it to organise and lead the fight against climate change?

Bauer states that organising and leading the fight against climate change is a shared responsibility. He says there needs to be an agenda in which everyone has to take responsibility within their sphere of influence. He states that a major responsibility lies with the institutions of collective decision-making such as the UN, the EU as well as nation-states. He adds that cities also have a very important role as they bring action to the ground and they are the ones that decide how ambitious they want to act within the policy framework that is provided by higher levels of decision-making.

Munich's role in the fight against climate change

Bauer says that they will not be able to solve the issue of global climate change in Munich, but of course Munich wants to take on its responsibility for its sphere of influence. He states that Munich has adopted a very ambitious climate goal: the city wants to be climate neutral by 2050 and wants to bring down the emissions to 3tCO₂e per capita by 2030.

Bauer picks up the argument that megacities would decide on the fate of the world's climate these days. He says that compared to cities like London, New York or Beijing, Munich is rather a suburb and even Hamburg or Berlin can't compare to such big cities. In that sense, he says, the interplay between the different levels of government is very important in Germany.

Bauer mentions that compared to the city-states Berlin and Hamburg, Munich's opportunities are more limited: "the structure already shows that our hands are a bit tied, however you can do a lot as a municipality within your own jurisdiction."²⁷

Bauer stresses that it is important to make the public aware of the climate topic.

4.3.2 The city in multi-level climate governance

Munich's role in the fight against climate change with regard to the role of the national government

Bauer states that the relationship between the Munich and the national government is not characterised by competition but by cooperation. The national government simply has other things to do than Munich, he says: "We always say that when everyone does their homework, we get can achieve the [climate] goals."²⁸ He states that one can see that the national

²⁷ German original: "da merkt schon auch in der Struktur, dass uns ein bisschen die Hände gebunden sind auf der einen Seite, auf der anderen Seite kann man als Kommune sehr viel vor Ort machen" (Bauer).

²⁸ German original: „Wir sagen immer, wenn jeder seine Hausaufgaben macht, dann kriegen wir das hin mit dem [Klima-] Ziel“ (Bauer).

government is active in the field of climate action, to his liking it could be a bit more active but he states that a lot has happened until now.

Bauer says that the relationship between Munich and the national government works both in a top-down and in a bottom-up manner. Munich has to implement national policies but can also exercise influence on the national government via institutions like the Associations of German Cities through which Munich for example gave feedback to the national government's climate action plan draft.

Does Munich try to influence other actors?

Bauer refers to Munich's engagement in the Association of German Cities and says, yes, Munich tries to influence the national government but he emphasises that that happens within the opportunities of the constitutional framework. He says that Munich often tries to influence the national government when it comes to detailed questions in policy frameworks.

Bauer says that Munich tries to inspire other actors to follow its lead and to also adopt ambitious climate goals such as climate neutrality by 2050. He states that while Munich has already adopted the ambitious goal, the Climate Alliance for example had not yet adopted it and Munich tries to inspire it do to so. He says that the city sees itself as "leader"²⁹ in climate action.

Munich's role in global climate governance

Bauer explains that Munich's engagement with the climate issue dates back to the 1990s. Back then, Munich started to build networks with other Bavarian municipalities, this was expanded to nation-wide networking and finally to the EU level (mainly through Munich's participation in the Climate Alliance) as well as to the global stage (mainly through Munich's participation in C40). Bauer says that Munich is part of city networks with the aim of learning from other but also to use its frontrunner status to inspire others to also set ambitious goals for 2050: "without such an ambitious goal, perhaps the pressure is not big enough to become active."³⁰

Bauer adds that it is simply a necessity these days to be active at higher levels of decision-making, even when you want to only change things locally. "And of course, I already said it earlier, compared to the megacities we are a small town, but we have a good reputation and we would like to use it to make progress", says Bauer.³¹

4.3.3 The strong cities in climate governance argument

Are the interviewees aware of the strong cities in climate argument and does it influence their work?

Bauer states that he is of course aware of the argument but notes that the popularity of the argument does not lead to Munich taking additional action.

²⁹ German original: "Vorreiter" (Bauer).

³⁰ German original: "ohne so ein ehrgeiziges Ziel ist vielleicht der Druck nicht groß genug, um aktiv zu werden" (Bauer).

³¹ German original: "Und natürlich, ich habe es vorhin schon gesagt, im Vergleich zu den Megacities sind wir eine Kleinstadt, aber wir haben einen guten Ruf und den wollen wir gerne auch einsetzen, um in der Sache voranzukommen" (Bauer).

Do the interviewees agree or disagree with the argument that cities become more and more important in global climate governance and might even be leading nation-states?

Bauer says that it depends on your scope when answering this question. He says that for the German context he would not agree with the argument as according to him, the national government and the cities are equally engaged. Globally, he says, the argument might very well be true, especially when you look at the importance of megacities in setting political agendas. When it comes to implementation, he says, cities have always been very important as they are the natural implementation level. What is new, is that the awareness for this fact is spreading these days.

Would the interviewees like their city and cities in general to have a stronger voice in global climate governance? How do the interviewees analyse the current developments around cities in global climate governance?

With regard to having a stronger voice, Bauer talks about the German context and the mismatch between Berlin and Hamburg as well as Bremen on the one side that are city-states and Munich on the other side that does not enjoy the same constitutional rights as it is not a city-state, even though it has more inhabitants than Bremen. He says it would often be nice to have the same means as the city-states, on the other hand he does not want to complain as Munich has a very strong voice in the Association of German Cities.

Bauer says that he has a hard time coming up with an answer with regard to the consequences that a growing city engagement in global climate governance could have.

5 Analysis

In this chapter, the results from the previous chapter are analysed to answer research question 1: How do the climate staff of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich understand the role of their respective city in global climate governance? In the previous chapter, the results from the interviews were presented largely unedited, now, the analytical framework developed in Section 3.5 is used to analyse the interview data. According to the elements of the framework, the analysis looks both at the external as well as the internal dimension of the role of the city. Within the external dimension, I analyse how the city representatives understand the role of their city in 1) hierarchical, 2) vertical as well as 3) horizontal governance. Within the internal dimension, I analyse how the city representatives understand the role of their city 1) as actor to adopt ambitious climate policies, 2) as site for experimentation and policy incubation, and 3) as site to foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and to encourage public participation.

5.1 Berlin

General statements

The representatives of the City of Berlin state that the fight against climate change is a shared responsibility in which different actors across different levels need to work together. They stress that Berlin plays a major role in the fight against climate change because Berlin is the capital and most populous city in Germany and thus holds symbolic power and because Germany is missing its climate goals for 2020 and due to that, cities are now getting more attention. They state that the political system in Germany is characterised by consensus-finding.

Hierarchical governance

They state that the national level is very important when it comes to negotiating policies and that cities are good at implementing policies, which follows the logic of hierarchical governance.

Vertical governance

They however see Berlin not only as a policy-taker but also as an actor that is shaping policies on higher levels of decision-making, which follows the logic of hierarchical governance. They state that Berlin uses its role as city-state to influence the national government when it comes to climate policy-making. They state that Berlin also has a strategy on how to exert greater influence at the EU level to shape decisions according to the needs of the city. They state that this is important because EU legislation has become more important for their day-to-day work than national legislation.

The representatives from Berlin have very developed ideas on the role of the city at the international level. They state that Berlin and cities in general should make their voices heard more at that level. One representative states that the involvement of cities in international negotiations should be institutionalised because cities could help identify issues more precisely and could also help develop more suitable solutions than nation-states currently can. The representative argues that taking away the 'filter' nation-state and involving cities directly could improve global climate governance.

The other representative states that giving cities a vote in international negotiations might however not be a good idea as this would make reaching agreements even harder than it is today but he is still very much in favour of cities giving input to negotiations. The representatives also state that they can see cities that are entering the sphere of nation-states, for example at G20 Summits or COPs and that they claim the right to be represented at such meetings. One representative states that this is one of the two indicators for a wider systemic change in which cities are gaining power while nation-states are losing power in global climate governance. The second indicator is the way in which cities are acknowledged when it comes to the achievements of global goals, for example the SDGs. The representative states that the awareness is spreading in the global community that cities are important for the achievement of any type of global goal, not just city-specific ones, as they are the implementation level for any type of policy and have close ties to citizens and other actors 'on the ground'.

Horizontal governance

The representatives state that Berlin is active in a variety of city networks and that the networks not only serve the purpose of exchanging knowledge but also have an advocacy function in that they serve as the institutionalised voice of cities at the international level. In addition, they state that the networks are important to build capacities and make financing accessible in other parts of the world to scale up climate action.

Ambitious climate policies

The representatives state that in some regards, Berlin is more ambitious than the national government (e.g. coal phase out), in others it is not. Comparing Berlin's climate goals with the goals of the national government supports this interpretation: while Berlin's goals for 2020 and 2030 are as ambitious or even slightly more ambitious than those of the national government, Berlin's long-term goal for 2050 is less ambitious (see Appendix C).

Experimentation and policy incubation

The representatives do not state much about this, they however state that Berlin is a hub for knowledge, universities and start-ups and that the city plays a role in defining urban lifestyles with regard to climate change.

Foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and encourage public participation

The representatives state that it is important to include consumers in the fight against climate change and state that Berlin is in direct exchange with its citizens in an institutionalised form and that it reacts to political demands by its citizens, for example when they demand that the city takes more climate action.

Conclusion

The representatives of the City of Berlin are convinced that their city plays a major role in the fight against climate change. They see the fight against climate change as a responsibility that is shared between actors across different levels of decision-making that need to work together. They describe the political culture in Germany as consensus-oriented and see their city in an important role as implementer of national policies, but they also put emphasis on the vertical and horizontal dimension of climate governance and have very developed ideas in this regard. They say that Berlin uses its role as federal state to influence both the national government (where they want to act as driver to increase the ambitiousness of national climate policies) and decisions taken at the EU-level. They are convinced that Berlin as well as other cities has

an important role to play at the international level and they are working on strengthening that role. They see city networks as places for the exchange of knowledge but also in an advocacy function on the behalf of cities at the international level and as important places to build capacities and to distribute finance to other parts of the world. The representatives state that Berlin has implemented leading climate policies in some regards but that it lacks behind in others. They emphasise that the city is in contact with its citizens in an institutionalised form and reacts to demands for more ambitious climate action.

5.2 Hamburg

General statements

The representatives from the City of Hamburg see their city in a very active role in the fight against climate change in which the city contributes to the achievement of national and European goals and, if possible, goes beyond them. They state that Hamburg has a special responsibility as major industrial site and Germany's second most populous city. They see the fight against climate change as shared responsibility in which the international level has its strength in goal-setting, the municipal level has its strength in implementing and the nation-state acts as intermediary. They see actors across different levels of government in Germany working together and being headed in the same direction when it comes to climate action.

Hierarchical governance

The representatives describe that it is Hamburg's role to fill the policy frameworks developed by the national government with concrete action and that the frameworks do not achieve anything by themselves.

Vertical governance

They state that there is a give and take between Hamburg and the national government and that it is also the national government that looks at Hamburg to find inspiration for future policies. The representatives see Hamburg, being a city-state, in the role of influencing the national government with the aim of making its climate policies more ambitious. They see the goals of the national government as not being sufficient and want it to adopt the 95 percent goal for 2050. One representative states that there are however also city-internal conflicts when it comes to lobbying the national government in which Hamburg's environmental ministry lobbies for ambitious climate policies while other ministries lobby for the opposite.

The representatives explain that Hamburg is dependent on the right EU framework policies to make its own climate policies a success. Hamburg thus seeks to influence decisions at EU-level via the national government but also directly via its representation in Brussels.

The representatives see Hamburg playing a role on the global scale. It for example was EU Environmental Capital of the Year, which gave it exposure. They state that Hamburg pursues some good initiatives and that others recognise that. They explain that Hamburg also directly influences nation-states, for example through being part of the U20, where it gives input to the decision-making of nation-states at the international level.

The representatives state that cities rightfully emphasise their responsibility in global climate governance and their willingness to make contributions but think that they cannot largely handle climate action themselves. They emphasise that the national level is important when it comes to providing political guidelines. It can also tackle large issues like the energy transition

that cities alone could not handle. It is also the national sovereign, it implements EU law and can sign international agreements.

The representatives do not want to ask for more institutionalised opportunities for city involvement in international decision-making as that would make it even harder to reach agreements. They state that it makes sense though that cities give their input but that there is no need to bypass the national government. They state that we need a change in climate governance but that that change will be achieved through an increased exposure of the topic and increased acceptance amongst the population and not more city involvement at the international level.

Horizontal governance

The representatives explain that Hamburg is active in a number of city networks and that it uses them to exchange best practices with other cities. One representative argues that cities do network internationally but that that is not why they become more important in global governance. The importance comes from being in contact with citizens and being policy implementers and policy-makers 'on the ground'. Global city networking instead is a 'sideshow', says the representative.

Ambitious climate policies

The representatives state that Hamburg is pursuing some policy initiatives that stand out and for which Hamburg gets international attention, but that the city does not perform great in all regards. Hamburg's climate goals for the years 2020, 2030, and 2050 are at the lower end of the national target range (see Appendix C).

Experimentation and policy incubation

The representatives mention that Hamburg tested policy approaches that were later implemented at the national level. One could thus say that Hamburg acts as site for experimentation and policy incubation.

Foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and encourage public participation

The representatives strongly emphasise the importance of engaging with citizens. They state that as nation-states have given sovereignty to the EU, the decision-making level moved further away from the citizens. In turn, cities are becoming more important as level of government that citizens can engage with. Hamburg for example develops climate strategies for city districts in cooperation with active citizens. The representatives state that the interaction between citizens and the city is a major part of what gives cities importance in global climate governance. They argue that engaging with citizens brings the opportunity with it to advance the debate around climate change and to eventually create the right political conditions for the national government to implement ambitious climate policies.

Conclusion

The representatives from the City of Hamburg see their city in a very active role in the fight against climate change in which the city contributes to the achievement of national and European goals and, if possible, goes beyond them. They see the fight against climate change as a shared responsibility amongst actors on different levels (international, national and municipal) and strongly emphasise the role of citizens as input givers to municipal policies and in creating the political preconditions that allow decision-makers to act ambitiously on climate

change. They see the different actors in Germany cooperating and headed in the same direction. Hamburg acts both as implementer of national policies but also as source of inspiration for national policies. The representatives understand it as Hamburg's role, being a city-state, to push the national government towards becoming more ambitious. They note however that there are also diverging interests within the city government and that not all ministries support ambitious climate policies. They state that Hamburg shapes EU decisions in its interest and does so via both the national government and directly via its representation in Brussels. Hamburg also gives its input to international negotiations. The representatives emphasise that the nation-state still plays a major role in global climate governance and that its functions cannot and should not be taken over by cities. The representatives are not in favour of additional institutionalised opportunities for the involvement of cities at the international level as this would make it even harder to reach agreements. While the representatives state that Hamburg is pursuing some cutting-edge climate projects, they acknowledge that Hamburg is definitely not a leader in all domains. Its climate goals are slightly less ambitious than those of the national government.

5.3 Munich

General statements

The representative of the City of Munich states that the fight against climate change is a shared responsibility. Major responsibility lies with institutions of collective decision-making. Cities bring action to the ground and they decide how ambitious they want to be within the policy framework decided on higher levels of decision-making. The representative states that Munich wants to take on its responsibility within its sphere of influence and that the city follows the logic that if 'everyone does their homework', the climate goals can be reached. He states that the relationship between cities and the national government is characterised by cooperation and not confrontation.

Hierarchical governance

The representative states that Munich implements national policies and plays an important role in this regard as it can decide how to fill the policy frameworks provided by the national level and how ambitious it wants to be in doing so.

Vertical governance

Munich influences the national government for example via the Associations of German Cities, gives feedback on the national climate action plan and negotiates with the national government when it comes to detailed questions in policy frameworks. The representative states that while the national government could be more active in fighting climate change, one can see that it is active and that a lot has happened until now.

He states that Munich started to network with other municipalities in Bavaria in the 1990s and extended this to the national level, to the EU level and also to the global level via its engagement with C40. He stresses that it is simply a necessity these days to be active on higher levels of decision-making as we live in a globalised world. He emphasises Munich's strategy to inspire other actors to follow its lead and to also adopt ambitious goals, stating that Munich is a small town in the global context but one with a good reputation that it wants to use to make progress.

When it comes to the question if cities should get more opportunities to make their voices heard, the representative points at the mismatch between Berlin and Hamburg on the one side, being city-states, and Munich on the other side that does not enjoy those rights. He states that Munich is at a structural disadvantage in that regard. He says it would sometimes be nice to enjoy the same rights as Berlin and Hamburg, but he also does not want to complain as Munich still has a strong voice within the German context and can do a lot locally. He does not mention the international level in this regard.

Horizontal governance

The representative states that Munich is active in city networks where it wants to learn from others but also wants to inspire other actors to follow Munich's lead and to set ambitious goals for 2050.

Ambitious climate policies

The representative states that Munich enjoys a good reputation with regard to climate action. Munich has set itself the ambitious goal to be climate neutral by 2050. Unlike the other actors analysed in this thesis that set reduction goals relative to 1990, Munich expresses its goals in tCO₂e per capita. Climate neutral equals 0.3 tCO₂e per capita in Munich's metric. Due to the difference in metric, it is hard to compare Munich's goals to the goals of the national government but 'climate neutrality' is definitely located at the higher end of the 80-95 percent target range of the national government (see Appendix C).

Experimentation and policy incubation

This topic was not discussed during the interview.

Foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and encourage public participation

The representative states that it is important to raise awareness for the climate topic within the population.

Conclusion

The representative of the City of Munich states that the fight against climate change is a shared responsibility and that Munich wants to take on its responsibility within its sphere of influence. The city follows the logic that if all actors 'do their homework', the climate goals can be reached. He states that the relationship between cities and the national government is characterised by cooperation and not confrontation. Munich acts as implementer of national policies, in which case the city can decide how ambitious it wants to be in doing so, and also gives feedback to and tries to shape national policies according to its needs. The representative states that the national government could be more ambitious but has also already achieved a lot. He says that Munich is active within Bavaria, Germany, the EU and also globally through its engagement with C40. He states that Munich sees itself as leader in climate action, has adopted the ambitious goal of achieving climate-neutrality by 2050 and wants to inspire others to follow its lead. It uses city networks to inspire others but also to learn from them. The representative states that Munich, not being a city-state, is more limited in its options than Berlin and Hamburg but still has an important voice within the German context and can achieve a lot locally.

5.4 Comparison

We can see that the representatives from the three cities share many views and only differ in certain regards. Table 5-1 summaries those common positions and differences.

The representatives from all three cities agree that the fight against climate change is a responsibility shared by actors across different levels of decision-making. They also all state that the political culture in Germany is characterised by cooperation and that actors in the field of climate action are (more or less) working towards the same goal.

The representatives share the view that cities play an important role in climate governance as they are implementers and create action ‘on the ground’. They thus accept this element of hierarchical governance for their cities but also emphasise that they have leeway when it comes to interpreting policy frameworks and deciding how ambitious they want to be within the given frameworks.

They all state that they are trying to influence decisions taken at the national as well as the EU level. We learned from the interviews that Berlin and Hamburg have more legal opportunities for doing so than Munich, due to their special role as city-states.

Representatives from all cities mention some kind of engagement at the international level but it became apparent that the representatives from the city of Berlin have the most developed ideas and strategy in this regard. Hamburg can be seen as active whereas the representative from Munich only mentioned the international level briefly.

That brings us to the main differences, or the different aspects that the representatives put emphasis on, that could be identified in the interviews.

The representatives from Berlin stand out due to their, compared to the representatives from Hamburg and Munich, very developed ideas for engagement at the international level. While they did not agree on the extent to which this should be implemented, the representatives from Berlin are the only ones that ask for a strong, institutionalised role of cities at the international level. The distinguishing feature of the representatives from Berlin could be condensed to ‘strengthen the voice of cities internationally’.

The representatives from Hamburg stand out as they strongly emphasise the importance of engaging with citizens in order to create the political conditions needed to achieve systemic change. We can identify a difference in philosophy when comparing how the representatives from Berlin and Hamburg see the role of city networks. While the representatives from Berlin see them as an integral element in strengthening the voice of cities in global governance, one representative from Hamburg called international city networking a sideshow and said that the real importance of cities stems from them being implementers and having close ties to citizens. The distinguishing feature of the representatives from Hamburg could thus be condensed to ‘be active internationally but also focus on engaging with citizens as they are the key to success in fighting climate change’.

The representative from Munich stands out as he emphasises the role of his city in being a climate leader and inspiring other cities to follow its lead, especially in adopting ambitious climate goals for 2050. In contrast, the representatives from Berlin and Hamburg did not want to claim an overall leadership role for their cities. The distinguishing feature of the representative from Munich could be condensed to ‘use the city’s role as climate leader to inspire others to follow its lead’.

Overall, we can see that the similarities in how the representatives understand the role of their cities outweigh the differences. All three cities engage in all three types of external governance (hierarchical, vertical, and horizontal) and claim to be active in influencing actors at higher levels of decision-making. None of the cities stands for a confrontational style of external governance within the national domain but all emphasise the cooperative character of interactions.

Table 5-1: Common positions and differences between the representatives from Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich

Position / City	Representatives from Berlin	Representatives from Hamburg	Representative from Munich
View that the fight against climate change is a responsibility shared by actors across different levels of decision-making.	yes	yes	yes
View that the political culture in Germany is characterised by cooperation, that actors are working towards the same goal and that the national government plays an important role.	yes	yes	yes
View that cities are important as implementers that create action 'on the ground'.	yes	yes	yes
The city is influencing the national government and wants its climate policies to become more ambitious.	yes	yes	yes
The city is active at the EU level.	yes	yes	yes
The city is active in city networks.	yes	yes	yes
The city is active at the international level.	yes	yes	yes (but less active than the other two)
View that cities should have a stronger voice at the international level.	yes	in between	no
View that it is more important for cities to engage with citizens than to be active at the international level.	no	yes	no
Emphasis on the city's role as climate leader and trying to inspire others to follow its lead in adopting ambitious climate goals.	no	no	yes

Source: Own elaboration

6 Discussion

In this chapter, the results are discussed and answers are formulated to Research Question 2 *What can we learn from the insights on the three biggest German cities with regard to the overarching strong cities in climate governance argument?* as well as its sub-questions 1) *Does the case of Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich rather support the argument, or does it contradict it?* 2) *What could be learned in the interviews that might enrich the theoretical debate on the topic?* and 3) *What hypotheses can be formulated?* The chapter starts by mentioning noteworthy limitations of the results. It then compares ‘the case of German cities’ with ‘the case of US cities’ and the strong cities in climate governance argument before introducing the terms ‘challenger cities’ and ‘facilitator cities’ in an attempt to establish a typology for city engagement. This is followed by a discussion of the possible implications of the results for global climate governance. The chapter closes with a critique of the strong cities in climate governance argument, arguing that it emphasises the confrontational aspect of city engagement but fails to capture the reality of facilitator cities.

6.1 Limitations

Before we jump into the discussion, a few notes on the limitations of the results should be made. First of all, it is important to keep in mind that the results from the interviews cannot be seen as the official positions of the three cities. The interviewees noted that they cannot speak in the name of their city, instead, they spoke as city staff working on the topic of climate change. The interviews thus gave an insight in how employees within the three cities’ environmental ministries see this topic. The cities’ official position, that takes into account interest from other ministries, might differ. However, 4 out of 6 interviewees are in very senior positions within the ministries (3 division leaders and 1 head of the ministry). It can be assumed that these are used to taking diverging interests within the city government into account when speaking publicly (Pollmann mentioned this explicitly), which strengthens the validity of the results.

Another limitation is the small sample size. This is especially true for Munich, where only one interview was conducted. The interviewees also have different focus areas in their work. The two representatives from Berlin that stood out for having very pronounced ideas for the international engagement of their city, are the Head of International Affairs of Climate Change and an employee within the Department for EU and International Affairs within the Ministry of the Environment that is responsible for city networks. This suggests, and it seems logical, that the work focus of the interviewees has an influence on where they put the emphasis during the interviews. A larger sample size would have definitely helped to even this out.

Finally, the results and the analysis are based on interviews that were between 30 and 50 minutes long, which is not a lot of time to cover all aspects of a city’s role in global climate governance. It might thus be that more extended interviews or a discussion amongst all interviewees, in which they would have been able to react to arguments made by their colleagues, would have led to different results.

These limitations show that we should see the results with a grain of salt and should be careful not to overinterpret the details. Nevertheless, the interviewees made statements that were repeated throughout the interviews that we can see as the core of how these three cities understand their role in global climate governance.

6.2 Comparing ‘the case of German cities’ to ‘the case of US cities’ and the strong cities in climate governance argument

We can look at the list of common positions amongst the three cities in Table 5-1 to create the core of the cities’ understanding of their role in global climate governance. We can then label this ‘the case of German cities’. This is put in quotation marks as we just established that the interviewees were not in the position to speak in the name of the cities. Also, three German cities cannot stand for all German cities. Nevertheless, it is the aim of this thesis to investigate the strong cities in climate governance argument in a context other than the US and to see what insights we can get for the state of cities in climate governance at an aggregate level. For the sake of this goal, taking into account the aforementioned limitations, I refer to the results of the interviews as ‘the case of German cities’ and compare it to ‘the case of US cities’ (here, we also need to be careful not to generalise) and the strong cities in climate governance argument as established in Section 3.3.1.

‘The case of German cities’

The common features in ‘the case of German cities’ are that the cities as well as the national government share the same general goal in climate governance: they want to reach the goals the Paris Agreement. The German cities act both as policy implementers and as active players in multi-level climate governance (Benz et al., 2015). It is interesting to note that Benz et al. speak of “passive implementers” (2015, p. 322). Representatives from all three cities mentioned though that their cities are not passive when implementing policies from higher levels of decision-making. Instead, they describe that those policy frameworks often give cities a lot of room for interpretation and it is up to the city to decide how ambitious it wants to be within the framework provided. It might thus be more accurate to speak of cities as ‘active implementers’ when they act in hierarchical governance.

In the sense of vertical governance, representatives from all three German cities state that they influence the national level as well as the EU level and that they are also active at the international level. Engagement at the international level takes place with different degrees of intensity. Representatives from all three cities emphasise the cooperative character of politics within their national context as well as the important role that the national government plays. The cities see themselves in the role of supporting the national government in its ambitions and in the role of pushing it to be more ambitious. The city representatives emphasised the ‘give and take’ between the national and the city level.

The German cities want to make their voices heard at the international level but are cautious to ask for official representation and voting rights in international institutions as this could make consensus-finding more complex and could slow it down unnecessarily. Even though the representatives had different ideas on the extent to which cities should be represented at the international level, their positions could be summarised by saying that cities should play an advisory role at the international level. This means that they bring a city perspective to international negotiations but that nation-states remain the actors that finally take decisions.

The German cities emphasised the importance of engaging with citizens in both a citizen-city direction but also the other way around. Citizens can be important drivers for more ambitious climate action in cities. Cities can also support citizen’s movements such as Fridays For Future to create the right political conditions, so that the national government feels supported or pressured to introduce more ambitious climate action.

‘The case of US cities’ and the strong cities in climate governance argument

‘The case of US cities’ is characterised by a mismatch between the aim of the cities that feel bound to the goals of the Paris Agreement and the goals of the national government that announced to withdraw the country from the Paris Agreement, that stopped conducting climate action and that started rolling back already established climate policies. With their claim ‘we are still in’, the cities went into clear opposition to the national government’s ‘we are out’ position. The cities try to compensate for the lack of national action by introducing ambitious climate policies and are trying to keep the country on track to meeting its NDC goals. The cities not only try to take over the domestic function of the national government but also try to compensate for its inaction at the international level by demanding to be represented at the UNFCCC negotiations and by wanting to submit a societal NDC. The cities thus openly challenge the authority of the national government both domestically as well as internationally. By doing so, they meet the criteria of the working definition of the strong cities in climate governance argument as established in Section 3.3.1: 1) Having more ambitious climate policies in place than the national government, 2) challenging the authority of the national government by taking on a more important role in global politics, and 3) working without support or even despite opposition by the national government.

Comparison

The German cities under investigation clearly show a different behaviour than the US cities. Whereas the US cities went into full opposition to the government, it is the German cities’ goal to support the national government. The German cities under investigation also do not meet the criteria of the strong cities in climate governance argument. Their climate policies are not more ambitious than those of the national government and they do not work without the support or despite opposition of the national government. Positioning the German cities with regard to the second criterion (Cities challenge the authority of nation-states and disrupt the political order by taking on a more important role in global politics) is more ambiguous. All three cities are active at the international level, for example through attending conferences that were traditionally reserved for nation-states, but explicitly state that they accept the national government as Germany’s official representation at the international level. Following their statements, one could argue that they are not challenging the authority of the German state as this is not their intent. One could however also argue that simply by entering a space that was traditionally the domain of nation-states, the cities are challenging the authority of nation-states. This is not the space to definitively establish which interpretation is true. What is clear, is that the three German cities under investigation do not challenge the authority of the German government to the extent to which the US cities are challenging the authority of their government, especially as the German cities state that they cooperate with the national government and do not see themselves in confrontation with it.

6.3 Introducing ‘challenger cities’ and ‘facilitator cities’

Based on the comparison of the two cases, I suggest the establishment of two different terms city behaviour:

1. US cities as *challengers*
2. German cities as *facilitators*

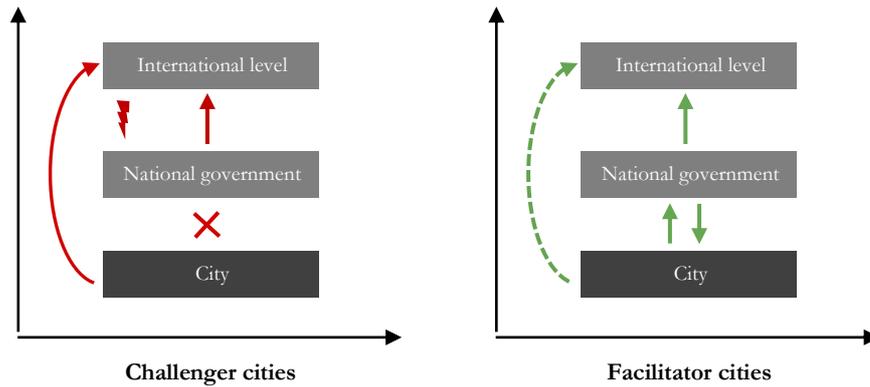


Figure 6-1: Behaviour of challenger and facilitator cities in global climate governance
 Source: Own elaboration

Figure 6-1 illustrates the behaviour of the US challenger cities that have a different vision for the country’s course in climate policy than the national government. They try to achieve GHG emissions reductions despite inaction and opposition by the national government and also try to compensate for the inaction of the national government at the international level by bypassing it and seeking recognition directly by the UNFCCC, where they try to demonstrate that the US society is still committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement. This leads to two different entities with contradicting positions claiming to represent the US at the international level (illustrated by the two red arrows and the lightning symbol, which indicates a conflict between the two positions).

In contrast, the facilitator cities in Germany as well as the German national government are both committed to goals of the Paris Agreement. They work in a cooperational ‘give and take’ manner in the domestic arena to achieve emissions reductions (green double-arrow). The cities use their influence on the national government to try to make it become more ambitious in climate terms. This includes engaging with citizens to create the needed political conditions for the national government to raise its level of ambition. In line with the traditional notion of climate governance, the national government represents the country at the international level (upwards pointing green arrow). In parallel, but not in an attempt to undermine the authority of the national government, the German facilitator cities make their voice heard at the international level (dotted green arrow) in order to push the national governments to be more ambitious. Facilitator cities do not go in opposition to and challenge the authority of national governments, but they seek other ways to work with them and to influence them to become more ambitious.

Despite the apparent differences in the behaviour of US cities and German cities, there is also a major element that they have in common: both are committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement. The major external circumstance that differentiates them is the behaviour of their respective national government. A hypothesis could thus be that if a city feels bound to the goals of the Paris Agreement, it is the behaviour of its national government that determines whether the city acts as challenger city or as facilitator city. This hypothesis follows the narrative of ‘the less the national level achieves, the more cities need to step up’ that was both mentioned by the representatives in the interviews and in the academic literature (e.g. Johnson, 2018).

One could hypothesise that the German cities might take on a confrontational stance similar to the US cities, would a newly elected German government announce the country’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, and would it cease all climate action. While this is solely

hypothetical, it is important to keep in mind that the US cities did not adopt a confrontational stance for the sake of starting a confrontation but because they tried to keep the country on the course that had been initiated by the previous administration. The German cities simply do not need to take such measures and still reach the same goal as the US cities: they work towards reaching the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Another factor that could explain the difference in behaviour is a difference in political culture between the two countries. Whereas all representatives emphasised that the political culture in Germany is characterised by cooperation and the ambition to make decisions in a consensus-based manner, including the views of political opponents, they stated that the political culture in the US is characterised by strong opposition between different layers of government. This is reinforced by the two-party system that does not require a party to work with other parties as it is the case in democracies that usually have coalition governments. The representatives stated that an open confrontation between cities and the national government, as we can observe it in the US, is unprecedented in Germany and is unlikely to occur due to its political culture.

6.4 Implications for global climate governance

After having compared ‘the case of German cities’ with ‘the case of US cities’ and the strong cities in climate governance argument and having introduced the terms challenger and facilitator cities, we will now shift our attention to the implications for global climate governance.

The potential of challenger cities to disrupt the political order

Increased city engagement in global climate governance, especially if it challenges the authority of nation-states, has the potential to massively disrupt the established climate regime and the traditional notion of climate governance (e.g. Acuto, 2017). The US cities are the prime example for this. They challenge the national government’s authority on setting the country’s course on climate action and claim the right to represent the country on the international stage. In consequence, external actors have to decide which entity they want to engage with if they want to engage with ‘the US’ on the topic of climate action.

We can already observe how the first precedents are created in this regard. In June 2017, the Chinese President Xi Jinping met with California’s Governor Jerry Brown to discuss how to cooperate on climate change (Gardels, 2018). Instead of meeting with the US national government, President Xi chose to meet with a sub-national actor, undermining the authority of the national government, legitimising a sub-national actor and changing the way international relations are conducted.

Similarly, at the 2018 COP in Katowice, Poland, the US was represented both by the official delegation of the US government and by the We Are Still In coalition that set up a ‘US Climate Action Center’. According to media reports, the We Are Still In pavilion was set up in the centre of the event location, next to the pavilions of the United Kingdom, the host country Poland, and New Zealand, whereas the smaller pavilion of the US government was located off the main the central area (Jordans, 2018). Again, foreign actors had to choose which entity they wanted to engage with: the representatives of the US government that declared to no longer pursue climate action or the representatives of a coalition of non-state actors that are committed to the Paris Agreement. In case governments decide to bypass the national government and decide to engage directly with the We Are Still In movement, they

violate international relations protocol and drive a power and authority shift away from the national government towards the coalition of non-state actors.

Paterson et al. (2003) point out that global environmental governance “is a fundamentally political process involving struggles over who has the authority and legitimacy to propose rules guiding the practices” (p. 8) of different actors and institutions. Betsill and Bulkeley (2006) add that “[s]uch struggles take place within, across, and between spheres and tiers of governance and result in the redefinition of the roles of different actors and their relationships in governance processes” (p. 154). We are currently witnessing a struggle between the US government and US cities over who has the authority and legitimacy to represent the country with regard to climate change and we can see that precedents like the one created by the meeting between President Xi and Governor Brown lead to a redefinition of the roles of different actors and their relationships in governance processes.

The claim of cities to be able to represent their countries at the international level might not only pose a risk to their national governments but could in theory lead to a weakening of the UNFCCC and the climate regime. If we assume that more countries follow the US example and decide to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, why would countries that are still interested in conducting meaningful climate action be interested in meeting the official representatives of those countries at the COPs, if the representatives that care about climate change (for example the We Are Still In movement) can only be found elsewhere? This could ultimately lead to an increase in importance of bilateral meetings with sub-national actors and a decrease in importance of the official multilateral negotiations.

‘The case of German cities’ does not support this trend

One of the questions raised in the introduction was whether the behaviour of US cities is indicative of a global trend. More research needs to be done to find a more definitive answer to this question, but this thesis was able to contribute a piece of evidence from the German context. The interviews have shown that the representatives of the three German cities under investigation have no intent to challenge the authority of the German government to represent the country at the international level. Still, all three cities are active at the international level in parallel to the national government, for example by attending conferences that were traditionally reserved for nation-states. This alone can be seen as introducing additional complexity to global climate governance.

While the German cities do not match the behaviour of the US cities, they still claim a role for themselves in global climate governance and have become active players in their own right. The findings thus support the argument according to which “global climate governance has shifted away from purely multilateral governance arrangements (where authority derives primarily from the power of nation-states) to a hybrid of transnational and polycentric governance arrangements, in which a much larger range of actors is now shaping (or at least trying to shape) the global climate governance landscape” (Johnson, 2018, p. 6).

The two figures below illustrate this shift. Figure 6-2 shows what Johnson calls a ‘purely multilateral governance arrangement’. It follows the logic of regime theory. Countries are represented by their national governments that meet at the international level for negotiations.

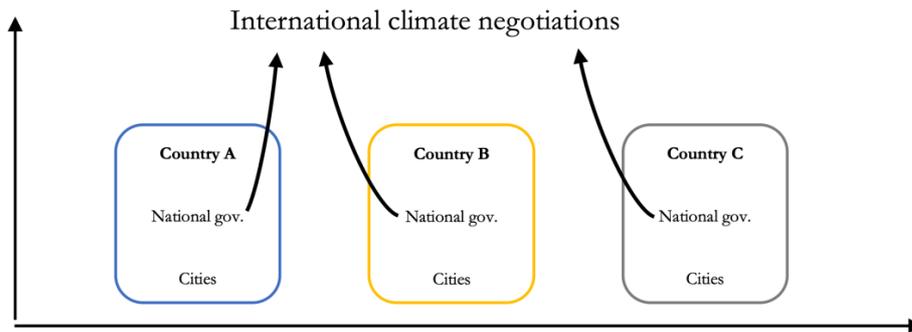


Figure 6-2: Climate governance according to regime theory
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 6-3 shows a more modern depiction of climate governance, based on the findings of this thesis, in which a larger range of actors is influencing (or at least trying to influence) the global governance landscape. Country A illustrates a ‘traditional country’, in which the national government is the only actor that gets involved at the international level. Country B illustrates the US case (challenger cities), in which both the national government and cities are competing to be seen as the legitimate representative on the international stage. Country C illustrates the German case (facilitator cities), in which the national government represents the country at the international level, but cities are also present to make their voice heard.

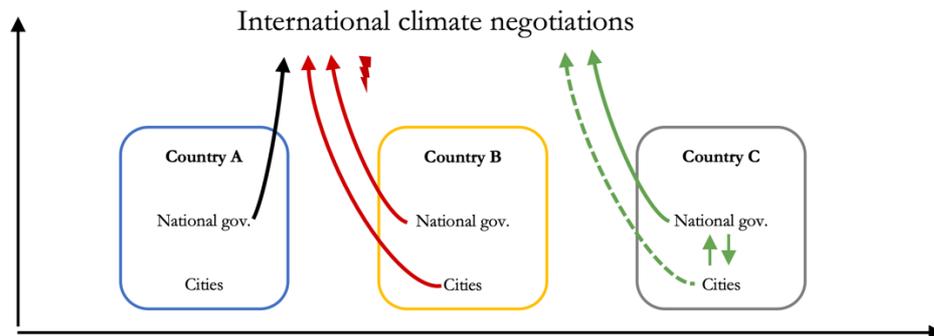


Figure 6-3: Additional complexity for global climate governance
Source: Own elaboration

Even though the German cities are conducting a more cooperational style of governance than their US counterparts, their engagement on the international stage introduces an additional variable to global climate governance, making it more complex and less predictable. Also, the mismatch between city behaviour in the US context and the German context is a source of added complexity. One cannot say that all cities behave in a certain way. The field of international relations has long acknowledged that countries show different behaviours on the international stage and scholars have tried to understand and explain these behaviours. The findings of this thesis, as well as other publications on cities in climate governance (see for example Johnson, 2018; Kern & Mol, 2013), suggest that we need to apply the same academic rigour to the behaviour of cities on the international stage if we want to fully understand the current developments in global climate governance.

This thesis only looked at three cities that together form one case. More research is needed to make more reliable observations of the global state of city behaviour in climate governance. Additional types along the lines of challenger and facilitator cities might be discovered. The

results however already indicate that there is no one-size-fits all answer. To say it in the words of Johnson (2018), “the apparent transformation adds a layer of complexity and uncertainty to the study of global climate politics, suggesting the need for new theories and concepts that may be used to understand this process” (p. 4).

6.5 Critique of the strong cities in climate governance argument

This brings us to the final part of the discussion in which we take a step back and look at the starting point of this thesis: the strong cities in climate governance argument. What can we learn from the insights on the three biggest German cities with regard to the overarching strong cities in climate governance argument?

The findings suggest that while we might very well be witnessing a shift in global climate governance due to increased city engagement, this shift might look different than bold newspaper headlines make us think.

Authors that support the strong cities in climate governance argument tend to portrait cities in almost heroic terms that suggest that they can tackle climate change on their own, for example Barber (2014) in his book title *If mayors ruled the world: dysfunctional nations, rising cities*. There might be cases, such as the US case, in which it makes sense for cities to go into opposition to their national government to make progress on the climate agenda. The city representatives interviewed for this thesis however unanimously described the fight against climate change as a shared responsibility. In order for it to be successful, they stated, a multitude of actors needs to work together. They said that there are many issues that cities alone cannot tackle but for which they need the support of the national government. The cities thus cooperate with the national government to move the country forwards. They also work with city networks, they engage with citizens, businesses and organisations, they work with partners at the EU level and the international level, where they try to lobby other national governments to introduce ambitious climate action. They are facilitators that use all channels available to make progress.

Based on these insights, it seems like confrontation should only be the last resort in the repertoire of city actions in climate governance and while confrontation is a common theme in the strong cities in climate governance argument, it seems like those that put the argument forward do not shed enough light on the cities that cooperate and facilitate.

Maybe we should think about what it means to be a strong city in climate governance. Does this require cities to be in opposition to nation-states or can it also mean that cities can be facilitators and links between decision-making at the international level and citizens that feel the impact of those decisions? Maybe ‘leading national governments in climate action’ does not have to mean that cities have to bypass them and to work in opposition to them. Instead, cities can inspire them to follow their good example and to become more ambitious themselves. We might simply see different types of ‘strong cities’ around the globe. In some countries this might require being in opposition to the national government, in other countries cooperation might be the more successful path.

We can conclude that the strong cities in climate governance argument portraits cities in a narrow way that puts emphasis on confrontation. This fits the behaviour of challenger cities in the US but fails to capture the reality of other cities. This thesis, having investigated cities that find themselves in a different context, has found that there is at least one other type of cities: facilitator cities that follow a more cooperational approach in global climate governance.

7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis. It first recalls the contributions made by it, then points at noteworthy limitations and finally establishes hypotheses for use in future research and suggests adaptations to the analytical framework.

7.1 The contribution made by this thesis

This thesis investigated the role of cities in global climate governance. It took a narrative as starting point that recently gained prominence in academia, media and amongst policy-makers: while nation-states are struggling to introduce ambitious climate action, cities are “leading national governments” (Park Won-soon in Worland, 2015) and are the driving force in the fight against climate change. I named this the *strong cities in climate governance argument* and established a working definition according to which

1. cities lead national governments in the fight against climate change by having more ambitious policies in place than their national government,
2. cities challenge the authority of nation-states and disrupt the political order by taking on a more important role in global politics, and
3. cities act without support from or even despite opposition by the national government.

Cities in the US that are opposing President Trumps anti-climate course are the prime example of cities that behave according to the narrative. They challenge the authority of their national government both domestically by introducing ambitious climate action as well as on the international stage where they seek recognition directly by the UNFCCC. This disrupts the established political order as it is traditionally the national government that sets a country’s course on a given political issue and that is the only actor representing a country in international negotiations. It was assumed that in case cities all around the world would follow the example of US cities, this would massively disrupt the global climate governance system.

This thesis investigated the role of the three biggest German cities, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, in global climate governance in order to find out if these follow the example of US cities and the strong cities in climate governance argument or if they show a different behaviour. The investigation was based on interviews with city representatives working on the topic of climate change.

The investigation was guided by an analytical framework that was constructed based on a review of relevant academic literature (the work of Marks et al., 1996; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Bulkeley, 2010; Kern & Mol, 2013; and Bulkeley et al., 2015 had a major influence). The framework places cities in a multi-level governance playing field in which they find themselves below the international as well as the national level along the vertical axis and next to other cities and city networks along the horizontal axis. The framework provides certain ‘boxes’ that allow a categorisation of city engagement. Externally, they can engage in hierarchical governance (top-down, implementing policies negotiated at a higher level), in vertical governance (bottom-up, influencing actors on higher levels) and in horizontal governance (working with other cities and city networks). Internally, they can introduce ambitious climate policies, they can foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and can encourage public participation and they can be sites for experimentation and policy incubation.

It was found that while the representatives emphasised different aspects of their respective city’s role in global climate governance, all three cities showed a core of similar positions.

These were labelled ‘the case of German cities’ and were then compared to ‘the case of US cities’ and the strong cities in climate governance argument.

In the US case, the national government and the cities do not share the same goal. While the national government announced to withdraw the country from the Paris Agreement, the cities declared that they are still committed to reaching the goals of the agreement. The cities went into strong opposition to the government, challenging its authority both domestically by introducing ambitious climate policies as well as on the international stage where they claim to represent the US at the UNFCCC negotiations.

In the German case, both the national government and the cities are committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement. The cities work with the national government in a cooperational manner to achieve emissions reductions domestically. Their climate policies are about equal in ambition. The cities are active on the international stage in parallel to the national government but state that they do not intend to challenge its authority. They see their role on the international stage as input givers to the negotiations of nation-states.

The case of German cities thus does not match the case of US cities and does not match the strong cities in climate governance argument. I introduced the terms *challenger cities* (describing the behaviour of the US cities) and *facilitator cities* (describing the behaviour of the German cities) in an attempt to develop a terminology for city behaviour in global climate governance.

Even though the behaviour of the German cities under investigation differs from the behaviour of US cities and the strong cities in climate governance argument, it supports the argument according to which global climate governance has shifted away from purely multilateral governance arrangements to a system, in which a larger number of actors is trying to exert influence on the international stage. This introduces complexity and uncertainty to the study of global climate governance.

The strong cities in climate governance argument was found to portrait cities in a very narrow way that matches the behaviour of challenger cities but that does not capture the reality of facilitator cities.

This thesis gathered empirical evidence from three German cities to help create a picture of current city behaviour in global climate governance. Additional research is needed to create a more comprehensive picture. In the following, the limitations of this thesis are discussed and hypotheses as well as possible improvements to the analytical framework are presented that could be of use for future research.

7.2 Limitations

A main limitation that is due to time and resource constraints is the small sample size both of cities investigated as well as of representatives interviewed within the cities. Only three cities were under investigation and these were the three most populous cities in Germany. As explained in more detail in Chapter 2, it was assumed that bigger cities would have more resources available to develop a dedicated strategy for engaging in global climate governance and thus the three most populous cities were investigated. However, these three cities cannot stand for all German cities and more research needs to be done to capture the variety of city behaviour within the country, especially as smaller cities will very likely show a different behaviour. The same is true for the US. Acknowledging this limitation, the terms ‘the case of US cities’ and ‘the case of German cities’ were used to be able to compare the two cases and to

generate a contribution to the theoretical debate, leading to the creation of the terms challenger and facilitator cities.

All representatives interviewed are working in what is the environmental ministry in the three cities. They stated that they cannot speak in the name of the cities as for example the mayor could. It would make sense to include representatives from other ministries or from the mayor's office in follow-up studies to get a more balanced view of the city's position.

The empirical evidence in this thesis is rhetoric statements from expert interviews, which brings certain advantages and disadvantages with it. It allows to capture ideas and visions of the city staff, but it is not very suited to for example compare the ambitiousness of policy approaches. Future studies could use a mixed-methods approach to compensate for this shortcoming.

This thesis used an explorative case study approach as there were little points of reference that could have guided the investigation. This means that the interview questions had to be formulated without having a clear idea of what the results and the analysis will look like, leading to a slight mismatch between data generated and data used in the analysis. This could be improved in future studies as there is now a precedent on what to expect when interviewing representatives from German cities on the topic of global climate governance.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Additional research is needed to create a more comprehensive picture of the role cities in global climate governance. Studies investigating additional cities in the German context or cities in other contexts are highly encouraged.

7.3.1 Hypotheses for future research

It is one of the aims of explorative case studies to generate hypotheses for future research. Hypotheses based on the findings of this thesis are presented here.

If a city feels bound to the goals of the Paris Agreement, it is the behaviour of its national government that determines whether it acts as challenger city or facilitator city.

This hypothesis follows the narrative of 'the less the national level achieves, the more cities need to step up' that was both mentioned by the representatives in the interviews and in the academic literature (e.g. Johnson, 2018).

The political culture in a country (e.g. consensus-oriented or confrontational) has an influence on whether a city acts as challenger or as facilitator city.

The interviewees pointed at a difference in political culture between Germany (consensus-oriented) and the US (confrontational). Political culture could thus be a variable explaining city behaviour.

Cities that have more constitutional rights to voice their opinion on higher levels of decision-making (e.g. through being a city-state) are more active in global climate governance than cities who do not have such constitutional rights.

Both Berlin and Hamburg enjoy special rights as city-states in Germany. They can for example directly shape national policies through being represented in the second chamber of the German parliament, the Bundesrat. The representatives from Berlin and Hamburg had a

clearer vision for their city's engagement on the international stage than the representative from Munich. One could thus hypothesise that cities that are used to taking part in a national debate due to their special constitutional rights are more likely to take on a similar stance at the international level. The representative from Munich mentioned this explicitly and stated that compared to Berlin and Hamburg, Munich's opportunities to engage on higher levels of decision-making are limited.

7.3.2 Improvements to the analytical framework

Possible improvements that could be made to the analytical framework in future studies are presented here.

Within the internal dimension of city engagement, the analytical framework assumed the city-citizens dimension to be a one-way street. It said: "The city as site to foster relationships with relevant stakeholders and to encourage public participation." It only assumed that cities would 'encourage' citizens to be more active in climate terms. Citizens can however also be the ones that encourage cities, national governments and international institutions to do more. Representatives from all cities emphasised though that they react to input from citizens (for example demanding more ambitious climate action).

As this thesis looked at the role of cities not only as passive implementers but as active players in global climate governance in their own regard, it is thus recommended that future studies on cities include the role of citizens not only as passive receivers of city policies but as active players that exert influence at the city level, at the national level and finally at the international level.

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Appendix A

Interview questions as sent out to the interviewees prior to the interviews (translated from German to English)

Interview: Berlin's Role in the global climate governance

I do research on the role of cities in global climate governance with a special focus on Berlin, Hamburg and Munich as part of my master's degree at the University of Lund in Sweden.

In academic circles, the argument that cities are replacing nation-states as driving forces in climate policy is currently very prominent. I conduct interviews with people who work for the city on the topic of climate protection in order to find out what they think about this argument. Is it true that cities are becoming increasingly important forces for an ambitious climate policy? Should cities set their own climate agendas, or should cities follow the agendas of nation-states?

Below is an overview of the questions I would like to ask in the interview.

Introduction

1. Please introduce yourself, state in which department you work and explain how your work relates to climate change mitigation.

Berlin's role in climate change mitigation

2. How would you describe Berlin's role in the fight against climate change in general?
3. How do you see Berlin's role in the fight against climate change in relation to the role of the German government?
4. Whose task do you think it is to organise and lead the fight against climate change? Is it the task of nation-states? Cities? Companies? Individuals?
5. Would you say that Berlin in its climate change mitigation efforts is implementing more of the national government's policies or policies that it developed itself?
6. Do you believe that Berlin plays a role in global climate governance?
7. Is Berlin trying to influence the climate goals of the Federal Government, the EU or other actors?

The role of cities in global climate governance

8. Have you noticed that the argument that cities and not nation-states are the driving forces behind climate protection is currently very prominent? Does this have an influence on your work?
9. What do you think of the argument? Do you agree/disagree? Why?
10. Based on the assumption that cities are actually becoming more and more important in climate governance, what impact do you think this could have?
11. Do you see your city sufficiently represented at higher levels of decision-making by existing institutions such as the EU and the UNFCCC, or would you advocate a reform of the institutional landscape to give cities a stronger voice?

Wrap-up

12. Thank you very much for your answers! Is there something you would like to add?

Recording and using the interview

I would like to record the interview to be able to evaluate it better and to make sure that I reproduce you correctly. I would also like to refer to you as a source in my work and quote individual statements from the interview directly. Do you agree? If you have any questions regarding the recording and use of the interview, we will be happy to clarify them at the beginning of the interview before I start the recording.

Appendix B

Interview questions as sent out to the interviewees prior to the interviews (German original)

Interview: Die Rolle Berlins in der globalen Klimagovernance

Ich forsche im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit an der Universität Lund in Schweden zur Rolle von Städten in der globalen Klimagovernance mit einem besonderen Fokus auf Berlin, Hamburg und München.

In akademischen Kreisen ist derzeit die These sehr prominent, nach der Städte Nationalstaaten als treibende Kräfte in der Klimapolitik ablösen. Ich führe Interviews mit Menschen, die entweder direkt für die Stadt oder in der Stadt zum Thema Klimaschutz arbeiten, um herauszufinden, wie diese zu dieser These stehen. Stimmt es, dass Städte zu immer wichtigeren Kräften für eine ambitionierte Klimapolitik werden? Sollten Städte ihre eigenen Klimaagendas setzen oder sollten Städte den Agendas von Nationalstaaten folgen?

Im Folgenden finden Sie eine Übersicht der Fragen, die ich im Interview stellen möchte.

Einleitung

1. Würden Sie sich bitte kurz vorstellen, sagen, in welcher Abteilung Sie arbeiten und wie Ihre Arbeit mit Klimaschutz zusammenhängt?

Die Rolle Berlins im Klimaschutz

2. Wie würden Sie ganz allgemein die Rolle Berlins im Kampf gegen den Klimawandel beschreiben?
3. Wie sehen Sie die Rolle Berlins im Kampf gegen den Klimawandel im Verhältnis zur Rolle der Bundesregierung?
4. Wessen Aufgabe ist es Ihrer Meinung nach, den Kampf gegen den Klimawandel zu organisieren und zu führen? Ist es die Aufgabe von Nationalstaaten? Städten? Unternehmen? Individuen?
5. Würden Sie sagen, dass Berlin im Klimaschutz mehr Vorgaben der Bundesregierung umsetzt oder eigene Vorhaben vorantreibt?
6. Sind Sie der Ansicht, dass Berlin eine Rolle in der globalen Klimagovernance spielt?
7. Versucht Berlin, auf die Klimaziele der Bundesregierung, der EU oder anderer Akteure Einfluss zu nehmen?

Die Rolle von Städten in der globalen Klimagovernance

8. Haben Sie mitbekommen, dass die These, nach der Städte und nicht Nationalstaaten die treibenden Kräfte im Klimaschutz sind, derzeit sehr prominent ist? Hat dies einen Einfluss auf Ihre Arbeit?
9. Wie stehen Sie zu dieser These? Stimmen Sie ihr zu? Weshalb?
10. Basierend auf der Annahme, dass Städte tatsächlich immer bedeutender in der Klimagovernance werden – welche Auswirkungen könnte das Ihrer Meinung nach haben?
11. Sehen Sie sich durch die bestehenden Institutionen wie dem UNFCCC und den darin vorgesehenen Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten für Städte ausreichend repräsentiert oder würden Sie eine Reform der Institutionslandschaft befürworten?

Schlussteil

12. Vielen Dank für Ihre Antworten! Gibt es etwas, das Sie gerne hinzufügen möchten?

Aufzeichnung und Verwendung des Interviews

Ich würde das Interview gerne aufzeichnen, um es besser auswerten zu können und sicherzustellen, dass ich Sie korrekt wiedergebe. Zudem würde ich mich in meiner Arbeit gerne auf Sie als Quelle beziehen und ggf. einzelne Aussagen aus dem Interview direkt zitieren. Sind Sie damit einverstanden? Sollten Sie Fragen zur Aufzeichnung und Verwendung des Interviews haben, können wir diese gerne zu Beginn des Gespräches klären, bevor ich die Aufnahme starte.

Appendix C

Comparison of the climate goals the EU, Germany, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich

All relative reduction goals are with a 1990 baseline unless indicated otherwise. The most ambitious goal for 2020, 2030 and 2050 respectively is highlighted in green.

Years/Actors	EU	Germany	Berlin	Hamburg	Munich
2020	reduce by 20%	reduce by at least 40%	reduce by at least 40%	save about 2 million t CO ₂ compared to 2012	-
2030	reduce by at least 40%	reduce by at least 55%	reduce by at least 60%	reduce by at least 50%	emissions of max 3 tCO ₂ e per inhabitant
2050	reduce by 80-95%	reduce by at least 80-95%	reduce by at least 85%	reduce by at least 80%	climate neutrality (emissions of max 0.3 tCO ₂ e per inhabitant)

Sources: (BMUB, 2014, 2016; European Commission, n.d.; Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2015; Senatsverwaltung für Umwelt, Verkehr und Klimaschutz, n.d.; Stadtrat der Stadt München, 2017)

Appendix D

List of interviewees from Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich

Berlin

1. Thomas Honeck (interview on the 21st of June 2019)
Honeck works in the Department for EU and International Affairs within the Senate Department for the Environment, Transport and Climate Protection. He is responsible international networks and the city network Metropolis.
2. Dr. Stefan Niederhafner (interview on the 17th of April 2019)
Niederhafner is the Head of the Working Group International Affairs of Climate Action and Funding within the Senate Department for the Environment, Transport and Climate Protection.

Hamburg

1. Cordelia Koenig (interview on the 30th of April 2019)
Koenig works in the Leitstelle Klima within the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. The Leitstelle Klima is responsible for developing Hamburg's climate strategy. Koenig is responsible for the topics energy and industry as well as green economy and international affairs.
2. Wolfgang Michael Pollman (interview on the 2nd of May 2019)
Pollmann is Staatsrat (the highest political officer) in the Ministry of the Environment and Energy. He leads the Ministry under the Minister Jens Kerstan.
3. Anselm Sprandel (interview on the 10th of May 2019)
Sprandel heads the Office for Climate and Energy, a sub-division of the Ministry of the Environment and Energy.

Munich

1. Andreas Bauer (interview on the 7th of May 2019)
Bauer heads the Division of Climate and Energy within the Department for Environment and Health.