



## Proceedings of the Resilient Cities 2014 congress

### Session G2: Local integrated climate action from an urban planning perspective

#### Climate Dialogue – Process-Management as a Planning Tool

#### Process optimisation, mobilisation, and communication in local climate action

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#### Abstract:

Municipalities play a strategic role in climate protection as planners, regulators, producers, and role models. The project Climate Dialogue aims at providing these key actors with tools to improve and optimise their processes of learning, exchange, and planning related to climate action. It examines and supports these processes, including studying the transformation process itself, providing capacity building for local change agents and developing tools for learning from good practice. Despite being one of the major success factors for local climate action, process design, communication and collaboration on a local level need strengthening and methodological improvement.

#### Keywords:

Capacity Building, Change Agents, Good Practice, Process Design, Transformation

#### DISCLAIMER

The presented text reflects our research and analysis as of August 15, 2014. Any changes of facts, and therefore conclusions that result from more recent developments have not been included. The contents of this article are the sole responsibility of the implementing consortium under the lead of adelphi and cannot be taken to necessarily reflect the views of the German the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).

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## 1. Background

Municipalities play a strategic role in climate protection. They are planners, regulators, producers, and role models. They drive developments. They can achieve substantial reductions in GHG emissions across all public service sectors, such as transport, urban planning and development, land use, renewable energies and energy efficiency, water and waste water, waste and resource management, as well as sustainable production and consumption. Furthermore, regional business and civil society play a vital role for change at the local level.

Representing an important pillar of German climate policy, municipal climate protection is promoted by the so-called “Kommunalrichtlinie” (local directive), financed by the National Climate Protection Initiative (“Nationale Klimaschutzinitiative”; NKI). Since its inception in 2008, municipalities have been receiving funding to finance strategy development and implementation, including employment of climate protection managers, and investments.<sup>1</sup>

In order to benefit most effectively from existing support schemes, municipalities need to be well informed about all relevant funding opportunities. Effectively engaging in local level climate protection requires both know-how and political will, which, in turn, depends upon improved communication, particularly across political levels and societal sectors.

Local climate action needs to be embedded in the overall transformation towards a carbon-neutral society. Local governments, national ministries and agencies, business representatives, civil society, individual citizens, and international partners need to be part of the process. They meet real opportunities as well as considerable obstacles.

In order to tackle these challenges, the project Climate Dialogue focuses on processes of communication and collaboration. Dialogue and knowledge exchange are being facilitated in order to inspire learning and action and increase efficiency. Tools for improved process design, management and capacity building are being developed and tested.

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<sup>1</sup> More information, facts and figures on the German national and international initiatives online <http://www.bmub.bund.de/en/topics/climate-energy/climate-initiative/>

### **The Project**

Process optimisation, mobilisation, and communication are pivotal to the 3-year project “Climate Dialogue” (2013-15). On behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), climate protection at municipal level is encouraged through information exchange, networking, and capacity building. To this end, reflections and mutual learning processes between key actors are supported.

A consortium of six institutes under the leadership of adelphi is in charge of the content and implementation of the project. The consortium is comprised of: Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik (Difu), Institut EBUS, IFEU Institut für Energie- und Umweltforschung Heidelberg, Klima-Bündnis, Pestel Institut.

The project consortium is developing targeted modules with advice and practical support for the political and administrative management of municipal climate protection, including planning as well as implementation. Short studies on local transformation processes, workshops, and expert dialogues are part of the programme, as are various training workshops and the design of toolsets.

## **2. Understanding Transformation**

In order to gain deeper knowledge about what can trigger engagement in climate issues in municipalities, the project is examining the process prior to a positive decision on climate action. It sheds light on the “soft” factors, like individual motivations, relationships between actors and political and social processes that community leaders can influence in addition to the more traditional observable factors such as administrative action, investments and public announcements. It can be assumed that several paths lead to the political will of taking climate action. A better understanding of these “paths” can help optimizing support schemes and providing targeted solutions.

The study is looking at ten municipalities through in-depth interviews with various actors. The range of opinions and positions represented by these actors is as comprehensive as possible, including supporters and antagonists of climate action. Background information from public sources on the process is complementing interview data, providing a common base for the individual perspectives to be combined into one comprehensive “story” of the process.

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Interviews are conducted using the flexible, yet precise qualitative methodology of “story-listening”. The interviewee is encouraged to tell her/his individual version of why and how climate action in the municipality began, supported by careful inquiring by the interviewer. “Story-listening” is a mix of narrative and problem focused interview, identifying hypotheses through dialogue, and in addition aiming to pinpoint factors derived from change management theory.<sup>2</sup>

The draft story is being discussed jointly with all interviewees in situ. This generates reflection and dialogue on individual positions and contributions to the overall process. This results not only in an improved version of the story, but also has direct impact on the future process. How the impact of assembling the story finally manifests will be observed working with the individual municipalities next year.

Political issues are often subject to constellations of power that can hardly be decoded without substantial knowledge of local history and conditions. Therefore, exceptional sense of tact is required during the interviews. While dedicated representatives of civil initiatives often speak openly, but lack understanding for necessary compromises, public administrators tend to communicate more intricately. In general, the more publicly exposed an interviewee, the more s/he will emphasize the representativeness and value of her/his actions.

As any political process, climate action is subject to the interests and ambitions of diverse stakeholders. Four main categories of these can be distinguished: the political sphere, the administration, civil society, and local economy. Different “coalitions of the willing” emerged from these four sectors in the ten municipalities. Sometimes it is civil society and politicians that convince the administration; sometimes it is the administration that convinces politicians; or strong business leaders collaborate with administration, ultimately forcing politicians to follow.

It is clear that without committed change agents from each sector, projects remain isolated and not embedded in a comprehensive action plan or a consciously designed transformation process. Wherever this is the case, municipalities tend to be satisfied with their own efforts and don not compare themselves to more ambitious communities.

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<sup>2</sup> To this end, a list of criteria was created, based on various thinkers of transition-theory, drawing among others from the works of Koppenjan, J., and Klijn, E.H., (2004) and Kristof, K., (2010).

### **3. Change Agent Training for Local Climate Action – Implementing Change in Municipalities**

by Helmut Bauer and Hans Hertle (IFEU Heidelberg)

Germany will only reach its ambitious national climate targets if municipalities are on track for long-term and sustainable climate policy. Based on Climate Action Plans, local climate protection managers (CPMs) support municipalities to successfully implement measures. The job requirements for these change agents are considerable and multi-disciplinary. The Change Agent Training course conveys necessary skills and the required basics in situ. Developed by IFEU Heidelberg within the project Climate Dialogue since January 2013, trainings have been held in Northern, central and Southern Germany since fall 2013.

Based on experience from training energy managers in the 1990s, IFEU took inspiration in focusing on soft skills and process management, complementing technical knowledge. While it was always important in construction to consider user perspectives in planning and implementation, this notion is ever more important in climate action. Climate protection is a cross-sectoral endeavour, touching upon all municipal fields of action, from energy management to transport planning. No CPM is able to cover all relevant areas of expertise in sufficient depth. Therefore it is crucial to coordinate the processes of climate action in and outside the administration and change structures with a long-term perspective.

The required process management skills are conveyed during the Change Agent Training (CAT). The course consists of 12.5 days total (5 x 2.5 days) of basic courses and several 1-day advanced courses. All teachers have previously participated in a basic instruction before being appointed to running the courses that accommodate approximately 15 participants each.

A recent survey by IFEU revealed the very wide scope of duties of CPMs . The most common task is developing and implementing concrete measures for achieving CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions. Other important issues include public relations, cooperating with external actors and managing the climate action process. Of lower importance are counselling, training, environmental education, acquisition of funds and general administration. In addition, CPMs take care of general management tasks such as monitoring, controlling and supporting local actor networks.

Professional backgrounds of CPMs are just as diverse, ranging from civil engineering, architecture, and spatial planning, to construction or geography. Many CPMs therefore have similar, but very specific technical knowledge, while their skills in process management often varies substantially. As networkers, CPMs usually are responsible for all communication regarding climate protection within the administration.

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The CAT therefore focusses on improving process management skills and includes:

- Process and project management
- Process monitoring and evaluation
- Conflicting roles and self-conception
- Conversation and moderation techniques
- Public participation and public relations

A simulation game running through the entire course illustrates the different tasks CPMs face, making it very practical. Participants take on various roles within a municipality, experiencing different positions and arguments they will face during their work, and learn how to balance these. Group exercises on practical challenges further support this.

The courses are in high demand, which underlines their utility. The overall concept is perceived as fitting and adequate. Experiencing the practical challenges through the simulation game and spending sufficient time for immersion is well received. Introductory presentations by trainers have been designed to deliver concise definitions up-front, good background information, and specific examples. More administrative aspects of the topics discussed will be covered in the future as well. A small training manual helps CPMs to apply learnings later in their professional life.

#### 4. Good Practice in Local Climate Action

Learning from good practice is already well established in Germany (and other countries) in the field of local climate action. Since 2009, an award scheme supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety showcases successful examples in several categories, the [2011] re-publication of the “manual for local climate action” (Difu, IFEU, Climate Alliance) includes numerous examples of concrete measures. Networking events organized by SK:KK<sup>3</sup> or Climate Alliance provide important fix points in growing networks.

To improve knowledge transfer and networking is vital in learning from established good and best practice to support municipalities in the development of their climate action practice. The project is providing **methodological support** for learning among municipalities. Similar to the Change Agent Trainings, this aims at capacity building for process management – in this case focusing on optimizing learning

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<sup>3</sup>More information on the Service and Competence Center: Local Climate Protection online <http://kommunen.klimaschutz.de/skkk-in-english.html>

processes. The product – a handbook on learning from good practice - will assemble methods, tools and formats for successful interaction with and transfer of good practice examples. Providers and users of good practice are contributing to designing these methods and formats, and they are being tested in workshops with future users. An important aspect is, to consciously choose the term *practice*, which implies a long-term perspective of continuous learning and development. It is also meant to foster a cooperative culture in the field of local climate action.

Completed steps (01.2013-06.2014):

1. **Analysis:** evaluating existing supply, interviewing relevant actors and reviewing academic literature was compiled in a short study, on the basis of which recommendations were developed, using two basic premises: a) there is no standard solution, context always matters and needs to be considered; b) interactive and participatory learning methods are best suited for good practice transfer.
2. **Review:** These premises and recommendations were discussed and further elaborated during an expert workshop. Formats and methods were compiled that reach beyond traditional teaching (e.g. case clinics with peer-to-peer coaching).
3. **Conception:** Based on this collection, training modules with some stand-alone elements were designed. Additionally, ideas and approaches from other projects were considered that successfully addressed the issue of knowledge transfer (e.g. CASCADE<sup>4</sup>).

Future steps (07.2014 – 12.2015):

4. **Test:** After examining the supply side of knowledge-transfer methods for good practice learning, the derived tools will be tested in workshops with future users and developed further based on experiences.
5. **Realisation:** The final product will be a guideline document that includes methods and formats, as well as information on process design, tools and references.

Some critical issues remain in supporting good practice transfer. One is the difficulty of defining a practice as good or best (a checklist with assessment indicators is provided in the manual). Another difficult issue is finding the right target group. The sub-national level consists of several different layers facing different tasks, ranging from regional cooperation to challenges of small municipalities.

In general, the handbook will target municipalities who are starting climate action. Within Climate Dialogue, the work on good practice transfer supports

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cascadecities.eu/>

- Process optimization – because it helps to avoid re-inventing the wheel over and over again
- Communication – because it fosters knowledge transfer and networking
- Mobilization – because it provides tools to utilize examples for the development of individual good practice

## **5. Key Learnings**

Halfway through the project, the following learnings have emerged:

- **The transformation is ongoing** – climate action has no end to it, therefore it must be implemented – *mainstreamed* - in daily routines.
- **Process matters!** – ‘Soft skills’, communication, knowledge exchange and networking are key to successful implementation.
- **Uncertainty and soft targets** – open-ended processes may not yield results in hard, measurable facts. New indicators of success need to be defined.
- **Shared issues** – Climate issues are relevant across sectors, so is climate action: find synergies and use them.
- **Uniqueness** – There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Every country, every government, every municipality is unique and needs an individual, tailor-made approach, based on local knowledge.

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