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Vortrag: Explaining climate policy pathways of unlikely city pioneers: the case of the German city of Remscheid

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The German mid-sized city of Remscheid, located in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, can be characterized as an unlikely climate pioneer. In fact, Remscheid is a least likely candidate for pioneering climate adaptation and mitigation policies. Previous research suggests that climate pioneers are typically characterized by a growing population, economic prosperity dominated by the service sector, political influence of green parties, strong civil societies, and influential local research institutions. However, none of the listed characteristics apply to Remscheid - quite to the contrary. The paper aims at solving this research puzzle, based on an in-depth case-study of Remscheid's climate policy pathway since the early 1990s. The city performs much better than most German cities of comparable size because the lack of capacities can be compensated by strong key actors and creative policy-making. Local actors manage to attract external funding from a variety of sources and frequently participate in applied research projects on relevant topics. However, we also find that planning from project to project and the resulting insecurity have a negative effect on setting long-term climate goals and developing holistic visions for the future. Regarding future research, we call for a systematic exploration of potentials and limits of local climate policy-making that is largely financed by third-party funding. Moreover, we suggest a closer examination of the interplay between local policy-makers and researchers and how the latter can be successfully involved as co-creators of local policy change.