

Short Term Scientific Mission – Report



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Project title: “Inter-local cooperation amongst C40 Cities in Europe: Territorial Reform by the Back Door?”

Mission summary

The overall goal of the Short Term Scientific Mission was to conduct empirical research on the role of inter-municipal networks in shaping local climate policy reforms, and to foster collaboration with senior researchers of the School of Business and Management and beyond, who work on related topics or apply similar theoretical approaches. Briefly summarized under the heading "Inter-local cooperation amongst C40 Cities in Europe: Territorial Reform by the Back Door?", the mission was dedicated to find at least a preliminary answer to the question of whether and how European cities such as London, Amsterdam and Berlin have been subject to 'trans-scaling' of sub-national jurisdictions through their membership and participation in transnational municipal networks (TMNs).

At the individual case level, the focus was on the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), a London-based network of forty large city governments and nineteen affiliated cities, which is committed to implementing sustainable climate-related actions locally. C40 Cities has been selected as research object, as it is often said to be the most significant case of 'global cities' acting as a protagonist in global environmental politics. To explore the governance activities of the C40 network and estimate its impact on the climate-related reform efforts in its member cities, following tasks were accomplished during the three week-long research stay from 22 April to 11 May 2014:

In the first week, I was mainly concerned with getting to know the academic environment of the School of Business and Management as well as to become more familiar with the work of Prof. Martin Laffin, who kindly hosted me during my stay. Further, it was also planned to meet with Prof. Perri 6 and Dr. Stella Ladi, who are both experts in inter-organizational relationships, networks and public administration reforms, but due to the tremendous expense of time needed to prepare the interview series (correspondence with interview partners, development of an interview guideline, etc.) those meetings had to be postponed to a later stage.

In the second and third week, I then went into empirical research and conducted five semi-structured interviews with C40 employees, who are in one way or another responsible for managing the network's relations between European member cities.

Here I focused in particular on the activities of London, Amsterdam and Berlin both within and beyond the network's multiscalar reach. While I had to guarantee anonymity to all interviewees regarding their names and concrete positions held within the network, most of the respondents working for C40's regional sections and/or city representative units tended to confirm the impression that the network constitutes more than a mere platform for knowledge exchange and best-practice transfer, but, first and foremost, serves as a hub through which cities can "by-pass" the inter-state approach of the UNFCCC by directly accessing other non-state actors' resources such as those of the World Bank's 'carbon financing' funds for instance.

However, to what extent the membership and activities of cities in transnational networks such as the C40 already means a 'trans-scaling' of sub-national jurisdictions or even represents a 'territorial reform by the back door', remains a question to be answered by future research: Whereas at least the 'global cities' all over the world have already found in networks (such as the C40) an important avenue to steer international influence and thereby tap into other organizations' resources, the national context still seems to be the most important framework of political and economic reference.

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