# Cities in EU multi-level climate governance

Prof. Kristine Kern
Leibniz-Institut für Raumbezogene Sozialforschung

IRS Leibniz-Institut für Raumbezogene Sozialforschung

# Introduction

- Importance of ***cities and towns*** for climate governance ***recognized by the EU***
- In most EU member states climate policy is ***still voluntary***
- Studies have focused on ***large forerunner cities*** in the Global North (Europe and North America)
- ***Most cities in towns*** in Europe ***lag behind*** the forerunners
- Most Europeans live in ***municipalities with less than 100,000 inhabitants***
- Local transformation pathways shaped by place-specific factors and characteristics of the ***member states***

# Three Phases of EU-city relations

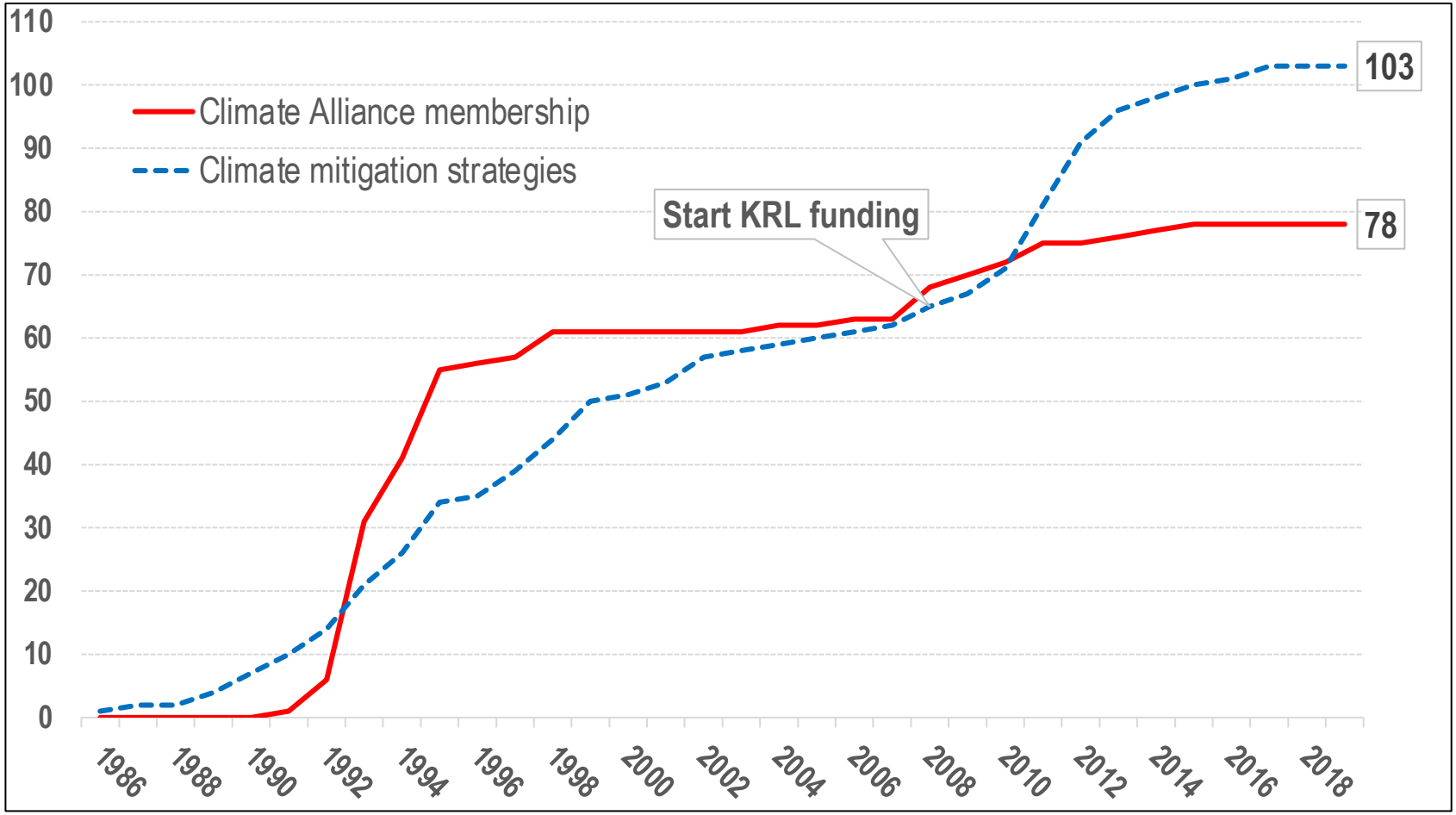
***Starting point:*** Rio Conference 1992 (Agenda 21, UNFCCC); Local Agenda 21 (LA21); in Europe: ***Aalborg Charter (1994)***, European Cities and Towns Campaign

**(1) Transnational city networks**

- ***General-purpose networks:***
  Eurocities (1986), Union of the Baltic Cities (1991)
- ***Specialized networks:***
  ICLEI (1990); Climate Alliance (1990), Energie-Cités (1994);

  → Founded ***„by forerunners for forerunner“***

# Membership Climate Alliance and climate mitigation strategies in 104 German cities



# Three Phases of EU-city relations

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***(2) Covenant of Mayors (since 2008)***

- Set up to support implementation of the ***EU Climate and Energy Package*** of 2008
- ***CoM Office*** in Brussels run by a consortium of ***all major city networks*** (including Energy Cities, the Climate Alliance and Eurocities)
- Monitored by the EU ***Joint Research Centre***
- In 2014, ***'Mayors Adapt'*** on climate adaptation was set up, merged with the CoM in 2015
- Since ***2015 CoM for Climate and Energy,*** since 2016 ***Global CoM*** for Climate and Energy (after merger with the Compact of Mayors)
- By January 2024, around ***11,900 cities*** and towns in ***46 countries*** had joined the initiative (around ***10,000 municipalities*** in EU member states)
- ***204 'Covenant Coordinators'*** (e.g., regional authorities) and ***287 'Covenant Supporters'*** (e.g. national and regional municipal networks)
- ***46%*** of the signatories were located in ***Italy*** and ***26% in Spain***, including many medium-sized cities and small towns (2024)

# Three Phases of EU-city relations

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***(3) Development of the EU Urban Agenda and European Green Deal***

***Pact of Amsterdam (2016)***

- Cooperation of the EU, the member states, and subnational authorities
- ***Multilevel partnerships*** (better regulation, funding, and knowledge)
- ***12 priority themes,*** e.g. energy transition, climate adaptation, urban mobility, sustainable land use, circular economy, and air quality

***EU Missions on climate-neutral cities and on climate adaptation (2021)***

- Missions go beyond the cooperation of the Commission and local authorities
- ***100 cities from member states*** (plus 12 cities from non-member states) selected (out of 377 cities) for the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission
- ***Climate City Contracts*** (including investment plans); ***climate-neutrality by 2030,*** co-creation process with local stakeholders
- ***10 cities*** awarded ***EU Mission Label:*** Sønderborg (Denmark), Mannheim (Germany), Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Zaragoza (Spain), Klagenfurt (Austria), Cluj-Napoca (Romania), Stockholm (Sweden)

# Climate-neutral cities in Europe?

***European forerunner cities***

- Cities in *Northern Europe* seem to have the best preconditions and most innovative approaches (such as climate budgeting in Oslo)

***From the Covenant of Mayors to the EU Missions***

- Development of the CoM? Towards climate neutrality?
- Selection pocess and funding options: Mission Cities, Pilot Cities; Twin Cities
- Relationship between CoM and the EU Missions?

***Scaling of climate-neutrality concepts?***

- Differences between leading cities and “ordinary” cities
- Differences between the national preconditions in EU member states (energy mix, local autonomy, etc.)

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# Governing local climate action in Europe

## Types of climate policy instruments

- ***Regulation and mandates:*** legislation, strategies, goal setting
  ***Provision of services:*** regulation of service providers
- ***Economic instruments, financial incentives:***
  carbon trading, taxes, fees, general and competitive funding programs
- ***Voluntary instruments and agreements:*** climate accords, contracts, certification, awards
- ***Capacity building and enabling:*** information and advice, human resources
  ***Cooperation and networking:*** associations of networks and municipalities, functional networks and platforms

→ ***New policy instruments (governing by experimentation, scaling)***

→ ***Hardening of soft instruments (e.g., carbon budgets, climate city contracts)***

→ ***Financialization of local climate action (private funding of infrastructure?)***

# Organization of local climate policy in European cities

- ***Organizational models***
  - Environmental agency/department (traditional)
  - Specialized climate units/agencies (often in the office of the mayor)
- ***Integration climate mitigation and climate adaptation***
  - Full integration model (in the same organizational unit)
  - Pillar model (in different organizational units)
  - Project integration model (integration only at the operative level)
- ***Mainstreaming climate policy***
  - Inter-administrative boards (e.g., regular meetings of the heads of all relevant departments)
  - Climate councils (experts, stakeholder) and climate assemblies (citizens)
  - Check lists for the administration (e.g., for city planning, permits)
  - General climate checks (council decisions)

→ ***Climate managers as key actors***

# Characteristics of forerunner cities

- ***City size:*** bigger cities with more capacities
- ***Population:*** growing, young, educated population
- ***Economics:*** sound economic situation, service industry
- ***Politics:*** political and administrative support (mayor), green parties
- ***Infrastructure:*** ownership of public utilities and service companies
- ***Research environment:*** local universities and research organizations, city-university partnerships
- ***Civil society:*** strong and active stakeholders and citizens, institutionalized form of participation (climate council)

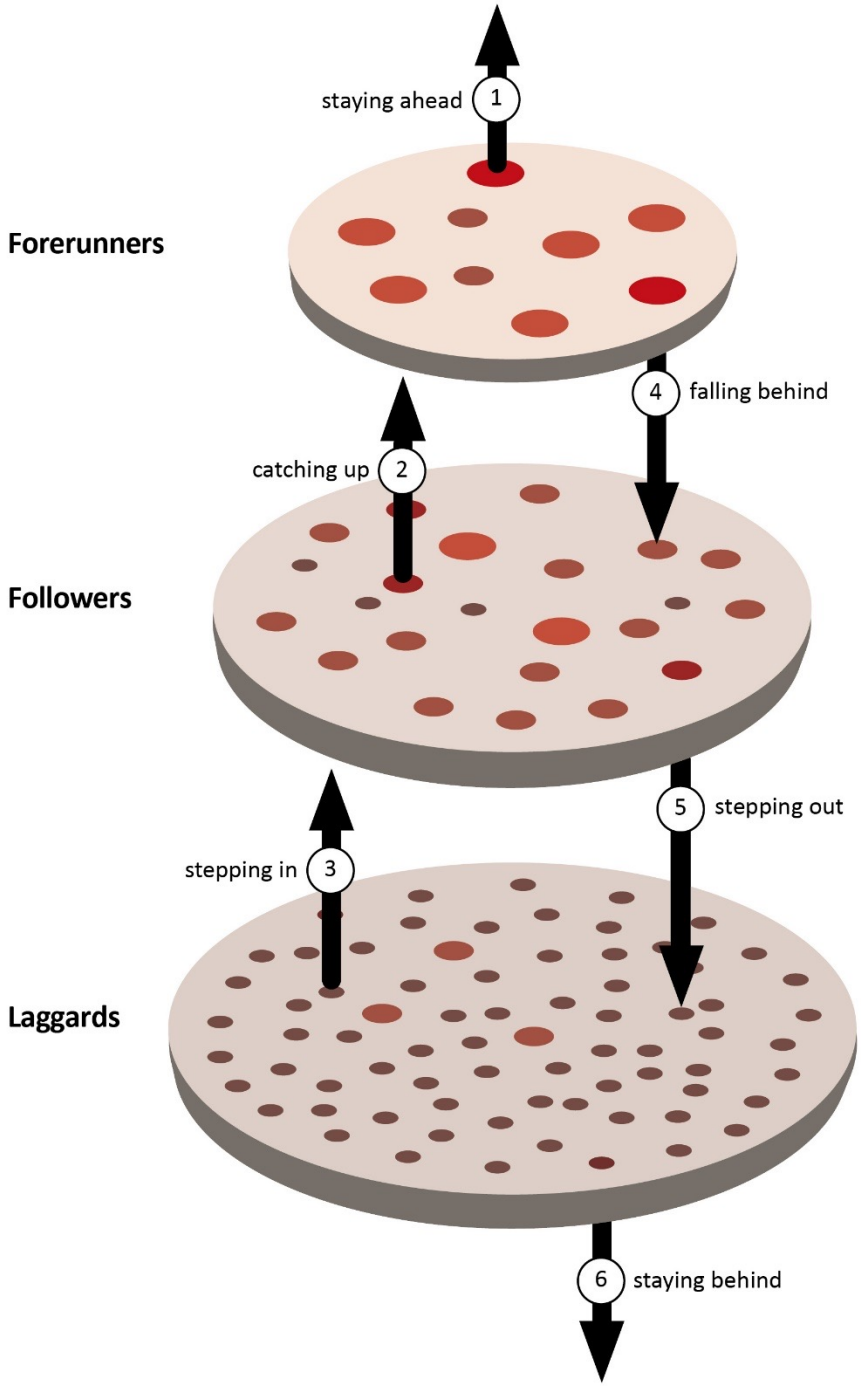
→ ***Smaller cities and towns*** with lower capacities appear to depend more on the decisions taken by ***regional, national and EU*** authorities

→ Developments in smaller cities and towns are ***more discontinuous***

# Local Climate Policies in Germany: 6 Clusters

| | Number of cities | Average number of inhabitants as of 31 Dec 2017 | Average total score on mitigation | Average total score on adaptation | Brief characterization and example cities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 14 | 859,109 | 66.3 | 61.1 | **Climate policy leaders:** balanced approaches at a high level, e.g. Berlin, Frankfurt (Main), Stuttgart, Münster, Rostock |
| 2 | 20 | 309,114 | 50.1 | 51.0 | **Climate adaptation leaders:** comparatively high level of adaptation, e.g. Dresden, Köln/Cologne, Karlsruhe, Offenbach, Worms |
| 3 | 9 | 173,111 | 66.2 | 13.4 | **Climate mitigation leaders:** very strong on mitigation, e.g. Bonn, Bielefeld, Freiburg |
| 4 | 23 | 168,909 | 44.7 | 34.6 | **Climate policy followers:** balanced approaches on a medium level, e.g. Potsdam, Kiel, Magdeburg |
| 5 | 24 | 125,042 | 39.9 | 1.7 | **Climate policy latecomers:** low performance in both areas, e.g. Paderborn, Cottbus, Weimar |
| 6 | 14 | 104,803 | 25.9 | 3.7 | **Climate policy laggards:** low performance in both areas, e.g. Bergisch-Gladbach, Salzgitter, Passau |
| **All** | **104** | **270,394** | **46.9** | **27.7** | |

# Dynamics between forerunners and laggards



# Dynamics between forerunners and laggards

- ***Forerunners staying ahead:*** a relatively small number of active and internationally networked (larger) cities, develop local initiatives and experiments on a frequent basis, national and international attention
- **Followers catching up:** active cities, want to catch up with the forerunners, have become more active in international networks, tend to adopt policies developed by forerunners
- **Latecomers stepping in:** mostly smaller cities that have been rather passive in the past, have started local climate actions
- ***Stragglers falling behind:*** mostly larger cities which were active in the past but have slowed down, falling behind the forerunners
- ***Dropouts stepping out*****:** mostly smaller cities that started climate initiatives in the past, which failed due to local conflicts.
- ***Laggards staying behind:*** smaller cities with low capacities, in which climate policy not regarded as an urgent issue

# Scaling *within, beyond,* and *across* cities (1)

***Scaling of (successful) local experiments*** between forerunners, followers, and latecomers/laggards needed

***(1) Scaling within cities***

- Reaching climate neutrality requires scaling within cities
- ***Place-based experiments*** need to be rolled out within the city; transfer from one neighborhood to other neighborhoods within the same city
- ***"Projectification"*** hampers scaling within cities; climate experiments often limited in time and space
- Socio-economic and biophysical ***characteristics*** may ***differ*** between neighborhoods
- ***Hardening of soft instruments*** such as climate budgets and climate contracts

# Scaling within, *beyond,* and *across* cities (2)

## *(2) Scaling beyond cities*

- ***Relations*** between *city* and surrounding region; beyond territorial borders of the city; cooperation within ***metropolitan region,*** between ***urban*** and ***rural areas***
- Interdependencies between city and surrounding areas (regional transport infrastructure, renewable energy infrastructure, and regionally produced food); relevant for ***climate mitigation***
- ***Regional cooperation*** to make cities more resilient and better prepared for extreme weather events; relevant for ***climate adaptation***
- May require ***new strategies*** and ***institutions*** that support scaling beyond cities; in particular integrated ***regional planning***

# Scaling *within, beyond,* and *across* cities (3)

## *(3) Scaling across cities*

- Scaling *across* cities refers to ***horizontal interactions*** between cities
- As climate policy is still a voluntary task in many cities, this may work only for and between ***forerunners***
- Transformation requires initiatives not only in the forerunner cities but also in smaller and less advanced municipalities; ***smaller municipalities*** cannot follow the leaders due to a lack of capacities
- Scaling *across* cities facilitated by ***national and transnational municipal networks*** such as the Climate Alliance
- ***Functional networks*** may help to transfer knowledge between cities/ municipalities and support urban transformations (e.g., networks of climate managers)

# Conclusions

**Challenges ahead:**

- ***Strengthening governance capacities***
  → Strategic, integrative, adaptive, and innovative capacities needed
  → Hardening of soft instruments (such as climate budgets, climate contracts)
- ***Taking the spatial dimension into account***
  → Cities do not control all leverage points of local climate action
  → national and regional dimension of local climate action
- ***Scaling of local experiments and matching cities***
  → Scaling and scalability essential for transformation towards climate neutrality
  → 'Matching cities' as new approach