Urban Agenda and Urban Sustainability Strategies

Taking Stock of Policy Implementation and Policy Discussion

Working Paper no 103

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Urban Agenda and Urban Sustainability Strategies Taking Stock of Policy Implementation and Policy Discussion

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Contribution to the Project

The contribution to the research project is an extension of insights in socio-ecological transitions. Therefore, EU consultations are compared with results of the research project to contrast the findings and relate them to a perceived urgency of the practical level. Further, it will be analysed if cities use binding sustainability plans and how they communicate their progress in the socio-ecological transition.

Keywords:

Academic research, Beyond GDP, Demographic change, Ecological innovation, European economic policy, European governance, Good governance, Holistic and interdisciplinary approach, Research, Social innovation, Socio-ecological transition, Sustainable growth

Jel codes:

C01, O18, Q01, Q28, Q42, Q48, Q53, Q57, Q58, R1

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Abbreviations

CO2	Carbon dioxide
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IAD	Institutional Analysis and Development
NGO	Non-government organisation
PM	Particular matter
PM10	Particulate matter smaller than about 10 micrometres
RE	Renewable energy
ROCSET	The Role of Cities in the Socio-Ecological Transition of Europe
SDI	Sustainable Development Indicators
SES	Socio-ecological system
SET	Socio-ecological transition
WBGU	German Advisory Council on Global Change

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Socio-ecological transitions are a main project, current EU policies, national environmental politics, and regional as well as local action address. Manifold approaches exist and the European Union is anxious to coordinate and facilitate the process of a consolidated transition. Therefore, a policy paper is being developed, the European Urban Agenda, which operates on all governmental levels to allow cities more capability in realising said socio-ecological transition according to their own structural, spatial, social, economic, and environmental predispositions.

In a broad study of 40 cities in Europe, we gathered a vast amount of empirical data that indicates the individual approaches towards a transition as well as their relations to European and national policies. This paper presents an extension of this research results. We depart from the results of the ROCSET study that is centred on the possibilities of self-organisation and ask about local sustainability strategies with concrete aims and goals. Further, the results of a consultation process on this European Urban Agenda are interpreted as an indicator on how the general perception of EU urban policies differs from actor to actor. Such an Agenda can contribute to unify individual approaches towards sustainability and consolidate strategies while maintaining the individuality of the local approaches.

This paper starts with an outline of the research of the ROCSET study. In the second chapter, the actual urban sustainability strategies are reconstructed to take stock of the current situation in our forty researched cities. The third chapter analyses the consultation process on the European Urban Agenda that then can be taken as an indicator on what the expectations for such an agenda are, and how they might reflect currently existing urban strategies.

1. Urban Agenda and the Role of Cities in the Socio-Ecological Transition

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1.1 Results from ROCSET

In the report on the Role of Cities in the Socio-Ecological Transition of Europe (ROCSET) institutional conditions are systematically explored, which allow and support new institutional arrangements apart from simple government-market dichotomy. These are "needed to enhance human prosperity without overstretching the earth's capacity to recover its resources. Such a transition towards a regime of strong sustainability presupposes the transition of the economic system towards a higher degree of institutional diversity. This would enable experiments with new forms of economic governance, which could be independent of the ever-growing consumption of natural resources." (Thomas Sauer et al. 2015b, 1) The underlying assumption is that favourable overall institutional conditions, such as a high degree of formal and informal local decision-making autonomy, are supportive for innovative institutional arrangements. These institutional innovations could be self-organised and co-operative management forms of urban common pool resources. The special focus lies on the overarching research question: What is the transformative role of institutional diversification and innovation in the governance of core urban common pool resources? The roles of the resource systems energy, urban green spaces and drinking water are empirically analysed concerning self-organisation in the context of socio-ecological transition (Thomas Sauer et al. 2015a).

Taking into account the potentially different starting and framework conditions of regions in different parts of the European Union, a new approach for sustainability transition analysis is developed. This theoretical framework developed in the ROCSET project is based on the SES framework presented in Amy R. Poteete, Marco A. Janssen, and Elinor Ostrom (2010) and can be seen as an advancement of the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. Data for the empirical research have been gathered in 40 cities within 14 countries (12 EU and 2 non-EU). To achieve a thorough insight into the resource systems energy, green spaces, and water, a quantitative inquiry has been conducted as well as qualitative expert interviews with

four different local actors from distinct sectors—government, business and civil society (Sauer et al. 2015a, 30–49). Additionally, case studies of all 40 cities have been conducted and used as background information (Cristina Garzillo and Peter Ulrich 2015). The results of the investigation show that new institutional arrangements do play a significant role for socio-ecological transitions. However, their part in different resource systems has to be evaluated separately. The individual features of a resource system have different impacts on the influence of these new forms.

In the energy system, the spatial attributes of the resource systems are changing in the process of a socio-ecological transition. This means that another dimension of complexity lies in the spatial recoupling of energy production and consumption. For this step a shift in regional or national decision-making, towards local decision-making autonomy is necessary, since local energy production has to be installed, maintained, and handled by the local users. Therefore, a central point to support socio-ecological transitions towards sustainability in the energy sector lies in the empowerment of the local level, directly influenced by the resource system. One way to achieve this lies in legal frameworks that make certain sustainability standards mandatory but allow the local level their individual implementation (Sauer et al. 2015a, 50–80).

The green spaces sector is the most vivid example of an active civil society and attempts to introduce alternative institutional arrangements. One reason is the close relationship this movement shares with a broader politically motivated movement about urban social problems. The dynamics of social conflicts and conflicts evolving around political rights in taking part in decision processes that relate to urban spaces are considerable driving forces. In general, the question "in what kind of city and how do we want to live?" is deeply connected and one major factor for civil activism. The example of green spaces indicates that one chance lies in an emancipatory aspect of civil society to create an urban space compatible with diverse aspects of social and ecological sustainability (Sauer et al. 2015a, 81–110).

The urban water system shows distinct differences to the other two resource systems in diverse features that influence the face of the urban water system. It is sensitive to complex biological, technological, ecological, and economic aspects and it is an indivisible natural monopoly; all of which make a participatory or self-organised approach difficult. The common approach lies in city owned public utility providers that are socialised and assemble the necessary experts' knowledge. Nonetheless, a critical awareness of the importance of the resource system is present and evolving. Water systems are organised in long timespans that provide a planning horizon with adequate room for long-term strategies for sustainable developments (Sauer et al. 2015a, 111–40).

Transition needs to be understood from a multilevel perspective, including household level to regional, national, European and global level, but the local level plays a special part in the implementation of strategies and the realisation of sustainability goals. Apart from new institutional arrangements advancing socio-ecological transition, high responsibility for the transition towards strong sustainability lies with the local governments, which are confronted with a variety of social, environmental, and economic challenges. Many of the researched European cities therefore developed urban sustainability concepts or plans to lead their transitions towards a resilient future. The conducted material from ROCSET—interviews and case studies—showed that their obligation and scope are obviously rather different, as well as the measures that are used as communication instruments with citizens and other stakeholders to describe sustainability in an appropriate way.

1.2   Aim of the Paper

As ROCSET so far concentrated on institutional diversification and especially on the role of civil society actors, this paper will focus on the efforts of urban governments in the transition towards stronger sustainability. Local sustainability plans and strategies play an important role in the overall European transition. A European Urban Agenda has been debated for almost two dec-

ades within the European Union (European Commission 1997, 2014b). The European Commission emphasises the "strategic role of urban development for EU integration and cohesion policy" (Umberto Janin Rivolin 2010, 13). The *Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*, agreed on in 2007 by the Member States' Ministers for Urban Development (European Commission 2007), is one important milestone towards this Urban Agenda, defining common principles and strategies for urban development policies. The Leipzig Charter recommends

- Making greater use of integrated urban development policy approaches by creating and ensuring high-quality public spaces, modernising infrastructure networks and improving energy efficiency, and proactive innovation and educational policies;
- Special attention to deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole by pursuing strategies for upgrading the physical environment, strengthening the local economy and labour market policy, proactive education policies for young people, and promotion of efficient and affordable urban transport.

Derived from the Europe 2020 goals (European Commission 2010a), Local Agenda 21 (UN 1992, Article 28; Bob Evans and Kate Theobald 2003) and inspired by the calls for an Urban Agenda and agreements like Leipzig Charter, many European cities developed own sustainability plans, oriented on their unique local challenges and preconditions. Networks like ICLEI[1] and Covenant of the Mayors[2] foster these developments (Harriet Bulkeley 2010, 232; Adrien Labaeye and Thomas Sauer 2013). Still, there are huge differences between content and scope of these strategies. The bandwidth goes from single projects to holistic strategies. It will be analysed, if cities use binding sustainability plans and how they communicate their progress in the socio-ecological transition. Therefore, the different plans need to be categorised concerning the nature of strategy and associated accountability of these self-defined objectives. The implementation of these strategies and projects will be outlined as well.

The main contribution of this paper is an additional, thorough analysis of the empirical data in relation to current consultations on "the urban dimension of EU policies." The public consultations are an indicator of the efficacy of an Urban Agenda and might suggest how to extend it. Further, different positions and views from different types of actors become visible. This indicates the overall expectations the actors have of the Urban Agenda. The findings indicated in the research report are a vantage point to compare to EU public consultations. The goal is to find and emphasise relations where recommendations can be issued, refined, or put into a broader context, by utilising the detailed case studies and empirical data.

The paper aims at gaining insights on the practical aspects of Urban Agenda and Europe 2020 in the cities; an assessment of Urban Agenda and binding sustainability goals as tools for SETs and advanced insights in SETs by adding EU consultations on Urban Agenda.

The following research questions underlie the analysis:

1. How are goals and strategies derived from European Sustainability Goals, Europe 2020, and Leipzig Charter and translated into local level plans?
2. How are sustainability plans implemented in the cities and what measures are used as communication instruments with citizens and other stakeholders to describe sustainability?
3. How is the Urban Agenda reviewed in the consultations and where lies its potential as well as its challenges?

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1 ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability is the world's leading network of local governments with over 1,000 cities, towns and metropolises committed to building a sustainable future. http://www.iclei.org

2 The Covenant of Mayors is the mainstream European movement, which has been launched and is supported by the European Commission, involving local and regional authorities, voluntarily committing to increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources on their territories. By their commitment, Covenant signatories aim to meet and exceed the European Union's 20% CO2 reduction objective by 2020, thus prepare and submit a Baseline Emission Inventory and a Sustainable Energy Action Plan. http://www.covenantofmayors.eu

1.3 Methodological Approach

The qualitative data analysis bases on primary data from the ROCSET project in terms of expert interviews (Sauer et al. 2015a, 30–49) and secondary data in terms of case studies providing an overview of the situations in the cities collected in desktop research (Garzillo and Ulrich 2015). A non-random sample of 40 cities[3] within 12 EU and two Non-EU countries of all European regions (see Table 1), obtained in a three-step selection process, will be analysed. The sample of countries includes different welfare regimes, national government structures, geographical locations, and cultural backgrounds. Two non-EU countries have been included: Switzerland was selected because of its environmental policy program "2000-Watt-Society strategy[4]" (Lukas Gutzwiller 2006). Turkey was selected, as in the case of the city of Istanbul it is arguable that it geographically is part of Europe and there is an extraordinary dynamism of the Istanbul urban area. It can be argued that developments within EU sustainability policy as well influence adjacent states and their cities' strategies. As a secondary database, City Statistics (formerly Urban Audit)—hosted by Eurostat—was used for city selection and data analysis, as it is the most comprehensive database on European cities currently available (see Sauer et al. 2015a, 30–49). The sample of 40 cities covers a variety of economic and demographic features, including over- and underperforming cities concerning GDP growth in the respective countries as well as shrinking to growing cities.

Table 1: Countries per European region

Region	Country
Eastern Europe	Poland, Czech Republic, Romania
Northern Europe	Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom
Southern Europe	Greece, Italy, Spain, Turkey (Istanbul)
Western Europe	Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France

Source: UN classification in major area and region in the world (UN 2010)

After country and city selection, the third sampling level is the actor's level. Identifying and approaching actors for the interviews followed predefined selection criteria to assess a comparable sample over all cities. In every city, four semi-structured face-to-face interviews with emphasis on energy, green spaces or water issues were planned with actors from different sectors (government, business, civil society; see Table 2); 155 interviews have been realised. Native speakers have conducted all interviews in the local language, transcribed, and translated them to English. The analysis and interpretation process made use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, especially MaxQDA (Version 11). The data has been coded (Sauer et al. 2015a, 46–47). Amongst other topics, interviewees have been asked about strategic sustainability goals that frame a local transition towards sustainability. This paper concentrates on these strategic sustainability goals.

The case studies for the 40 cities followed a predetermined pattern, including information on general environmental policies and resource specific sustainability programmes. Relevant information on sustainability goals and plans was extracted from each case study alongside the same thematic foci as for the interviews. Findings from both sources have been brought to-

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3   Aalborg, Barcelona, Bilbao, Birmingham, Copenhagen, Dortmund, Freiburg, Giurgiu, Glasgow, Goteborg, Innsbruck, Istanbul, Jihlava, Kiel, Krakow, Larisa, Leeds, Linz, Lodz, London, Lublin, Lugano, Madrid, Milano, Napoli, Nice, Paris, Potsdam, Prague, Rennes, Roma, Saarbrücken, Sibiu, St. Gallen, Strasbourg, Thessaloniki, Timisoara, Trieste, Umea, and Valencia

4   For further information see http://www.2000watt.ch/ and http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/2000-watt-society

gether in the next step and were systematised and analysed with respect to the first two research questions.

Table 2: List of actors

Actor	Profession
a1	Politician with a particular interest in sustainability (mayor for smaller cities)
a2	Head of environmental/sustainability department (or other department dealing with environmental issues or sustainability)
a3	Representative of the private sector with particular relevance to the issue of sustainability; This could be from the local chamber of commerce of a major business in the city
a4	Civil society representative (or leader of bottom-up initiatives, NGO, etc.)

Source: Sauer et al. 2015a, 45

The consultations on the urban agenda are in themselves a collection of contributions to six open questions that are answered by different groups of stakeholders, representatives, and individuals. The resulting documents represent processual data that was generated in the EU consultation process. As such, it is analysed and interpreted by means of document analysis, which evaluates its contents concerning the institutional setting it was produced in. In short, the focus lies on the stated aspects by the participants under reference of their affiliations. The interpretation therefore includes the logic of the respective actors and includes the context of the actors in the reconstructive process.

Group	Number of entries	Overall no. of entries[5]	Countries
Academia	7	10	Germany, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom
Civil Society	8	15	France, Germany, Italy, Sweden
Individual	11	27	Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, other[6]
International Organisation	13	26	France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, other
Private Enterprise	4	7	Austria, France, United Kingdom, other
Public Authority	33	59	Austria, Denmark, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
Other	9	23	Austria, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden
Overall	**85**	**167**	

However, the different contributing groups have diverging forms of knowledge and interests in the consultation process. Political and economic actors have a more thorough assessment of policy development and a more sophisticated interest in its results. Therefore, their possibilities

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5   The overall number of entries refers to the number of entries in the European consultation process for every country. For the analysis of the paper, only the countries that were selected in Thomas Sauer et al. (2015a) are considered. The other participants in the European consultation were dropped to narrow down the material and draw a distinct relation to the previous study.

6   "Other" refers to a possible option, given in the consultation details. It was especially used by multinational organisation or networks.

to integrate their own strategies are potentially more successful. Individual citizens might lack the time and interest to engage in policy development, which means to elaborate on planned strategies and the goals EU directives aim at. The knowledge forms are different on very fundamental levels. While individual involvement might remain superficially, the involvement of economic actors, politicians and public authorities, as well as civil society groups is more profound. For any contributions to the design of the Urban Agenda, they are more informed and more capable to influence the development according to their plans and needs.

Methodologically, this is a specific problem of the consultation process: the forms of knowledge, represented by differing actors, are structurally different. In terms of a comparison, this means to contrast expert knowledge on the one hand with lay knowledge on the other hand.

2. Practical Insight in Urban Sustainability Strategies

2.1 European and Urban Transition Strategies

"Sustainable Development – meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs – is a fundamental objective under the Treaty on European Union and the Constitution" (European Commission 2005, 6). The three dimensions of sustainability—environmental, social, and economic—are inseparable and interdependent components in a transition toward stronger sustainability. Sustainable development is thus not a matter of policy, business, or civil society separately, but must be advanced by all sectors. This transition includes political and economic as well as personal decisions. It calls for changes in consumption and production patterns, economic, social and government structures and most of all changes in thinking (see e.g. Sauer et al. 2015a).

In the EU Sustainable Development Strategy of 2001 (European Commission 2001) objectives and actions for seven—predominantly environmental—key challenges for the period until 2010 were set:

- Climate change and clean energy
- Sustainable transport
- Sustainable consumption & production
- Conservation and management of natural resources
- Public Health
- Social inclusion, demography and migration
- Global poverty and sustainable development challenges

The main aim of this strategy was to improve quality of life in the long term through efficient resource use, ecological and social innovation, prosperity, environmental protection, and social cohesion.

In 2010, the European Commission defined the *Europe 2020 Goals* for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth as a 10-year economic strategy for the European Union. Beside social goals, as well as research and development goals, the well-known "20/20/20" climate and energy targets should be met. These include the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels (or by 30%, if the conditions are right); increase of the share of renewable energy sources in the final energy consumption to 20%; and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. One Flagship Initiative of Europe 2020 is 'Resource efficient Europe', aiming at the support of a European transition towards a resource efficient and low-carbon economy. Economic growth should therefore be decoupled from resource and energy use and CO_2 emissions should be reduced, competitiveness should be enhanced and energy security promoted (European Commission 2010a, 3, 9, 14).

The visions formulated in 2014 by the European Commission (2014c) comprise the key priorities of poverty, inequality, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, health, education, gender equality and women's empowerment, water and sanitation, sustainable energy, full and productive employment and decent work for all, inclusive and sustainable growth, sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable consumption and production, oceans and seas, biodiversity and forests, land degradation including desertification and drought, human rights, the rule of law, good governance and effective institutions, and peaceful societies. These social and environmental objectives are input to a new transformative post-2015 agenda and to the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. "The Council called for a framework that ensures basic living standards, promotes the drivers of the green economy in the context of sustainable development, including structural economic transformation, and ensures the sustainable use, management, and protection of the world's natural resources and the ecosystems they provide. […]" (European Commission 2014c, 4)

The environmental dimension of sustainability could also be described as necessary condition for social and economic sustainability, as the destruction of human living space would involve the destruction of society and economy, whereas the reverse relation is not necessarily true. Thus, the focus of ROCSET and this paper is on the environmental dimension of sustainability. The main risks connected with climate change for the European continent include—among other things—economic losses, restrictions on natural water supply, changing conditions for agriculture, increased health risks, and loss of biodiversity (WBGU 2014, 30). It can be expected that certain European regions will be affected more severely than others will by the consequences of climatic changes, especially coastal regions as the Mediterranean countries. It is well known that the longer anthropogenic CO_2 emissions continue to rise, the more improbable it will become to be able to avoid that warming exceeds the 2 °C threshold. "If the required fundamental change in policies is not made in time, at least in the major industrial countries and emerging economies, then a point will be reached at which a future breaching of this barrier can no longer be prevented." (WBGU 2014, 39)

The responsibility to take measures to reach the zero-emissions target lies with all relevant actors: states, municipalities, companies and civil society, which should be motivated to adopt these objectives. Global solutions to the global problem of climate change are not very likely at this moment. There is an increasing discomfort about international climate policy blockades in civil society and at the level of cities and companies. Endeavours to influence climate policy are thus growing on these levels. Local solutions are as well easier to achieve and the implementation of measures is easier on a small scale (WBGU 2014, 44, 71). Moreover, up to 75% of anthropogenic CO_2 emissions stem from cities, where a growing share of population lives and energy demand, waste, water services, buildings, industries and traffic are centred (Bulkeley 2010, 230). Besides their role as contributors to the causes of climate change, cities are particularly affected by it. Reasons are their often-exposed locations and high population density. As cities are closest to individual citizens, "they can be part of a broader movement, influence the opinion-forming process, and take mitigation and adaptation measures." (WBGU 2014, 86)

Municipal involvement in efforts to reduce GHG emissions increased over the last two decades significantly. Urban policies became a key factor to global environmental problems. Research on as well as recognition of cities as venues of responses to climate change became more and more important (Bulkeley 2010, 230; Labaeye and Sauer 2013). Examples for active climate protection on local and regional level are manifold and include for instance city clubs (e g. C40 Climate Leadership Group), the Transition Town movement, and city networks (Bulkeley 2010, 233; WBGU 2014, 96). "In addition to the pioneering role being played by individual cities in climate protection, cities are also among the best networked actors in international climate policy." (WBGU 2014, 78)

The European Commission supports and encourages cities in various ways at adopting climate change strategies. The Leipzig Charter recommends European cities to formulate "integrated urban development programmes for the city as a whole" (European Commission 2007, 2). Planning tools should therefore be implementation-oriented and

- be based on the current situation of the city (strengths and weaknesses),
- define consistent development objectives and develop a vision for the city,
- coordinate different neighbourhoods, sectoral and technical plans and policies as well as the use of funds, and
- be organised at local level with the involvement of citizens and other partners.

To prevent urban sprawl and create liveable cities by combining compact city development with the necessity of sufficient green spaces, the European Commission (2010b, 28–30) recommends local actors to take measures for a more holistic territorial cohesion.

Motivation to become engaged in climate protection (on the local level) is diverse, for example out of urgency, to enlarge authority by claiming resources, as ideological expression or to profit by swift adaption to climate change (Bulkeley 2010, 234). Top-down and bottom-up elements are both important elements of sustainability strategies and can take into account the diversity

of local areas. Thus, cities need to develop strategies designed to fit their particular settings. These should consider characteristics of the biophysical environment as well as political circumstances, institutional frameworks and the availability of resources. Higher-level strategic frameworks are needed to face challenges of broader spatial perspective and to support local activities (Jeremy G. Carter 2011, 193–94).

Examples for successful approaches to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction in European cities relate to policy and strategy development and the implementation of practical actions. Local climate change strategies begin to emerge, either as part of integrated sustainability strategies or as stand-alone strategies focussing only on climate change. Often these are part of spatial planning frameworks at the municipal level. Individual local-level adaption projects are often supported by overarching strategic frameworks. Elements of a holistic approach are spatial planning frameworks, building regulations, but also awareness-raising initiatives. Research showed that the most efficient strategies do not only promote climate policy goals, but also combine these with other agendas, e g. health, wellbeing and economic competitiveness (Carter 2011, 194–95).

2.2 Translating European Goals and Strategies to the Local Level

Local governments have different possibilities to react to the threat of climate change, depending on their scope of action within legal frameworks (Sauer et al. 2015a, 73-77, 105-108, 136-138, 144). The implementation of climate protection measures is easier for municipalities with high decision-making autonomy and possibilities to control their own consumption through procurement policies. Additionally, there can be cooperation with other actors to facilitate voluntary action by business and civil society. Municipalities that own local utility providers (e g. energy companies, public transport, water utilities and waste services) can directly initiate and control sustainable local action. Recent market liberalisations made this direct influence more difficult or impossible for many cities. Through regulation by strategic energy, land-use and transport planning, local governments can in many countries incorporate climate policy goals into their strategic planning and through these plans indirectly influence GHG emissions (Gotelind Alber and Kristine Kern 2008, 176–78; Sauer et al. 2015a).

Several transnational municipal networks try to promote a systematic response to climate change through the assessment of GHG emissions, target setting, and performance monitoring (Bulkeley 2010, 235). Still "numerous cities, which have adopted GHG reduction targets, have failed to pursue such a systematic and structured approach and, instead, prefer to implement noregret measures on a case by case basis." (Alber and Kern 2008, 173)

Four areas of climate mitigation policy appear to be essential for cities (Alber and Kern 2008, 174):

- in the energy system (improving energy efficiency e g. in buildings, promotion of renewable energies),
- in the transport system (promotion of alternative transport forms, improvement of public transport, 'greening' of fleets),
- in the waste system (waste prevention, reuse and recycling), and
- in urban planning and land use (building standards, strategic urban planning).

To approach the first research question: 'How are goals and strategies derived from European Sustainability Goals, Europe 2020 and Leipzig Charter and translated into local level plans?' strategic goals concerning sustainability and climate protection from 40 European cities were ordered into the four categories:

(1) 'Holistic' sustainability strategy
(2) Strategies/plans for resource systems or sectors
(3) Single projects and programmes

(4) Missing strategy

These categories will be described in the following four sections and examples will be given. In section 2.3, a taxonomy of cities will be presented. The material used for this comprehensive comparison of 40 cases was collected in face-to-face interviews with relevant local actors and desktop research within the fourth quarter of 2013. The categorisation of strategies reflects the knowledge that was gained thereby (see section 1.3).

2.2.1   'Holistic' Sustainability Strategies

About one third of these 40 cities specified 'holistic'[7] sustainability or climate change strategies. These are characterised by an integrated view on the elements of a sustainable city and the approach to bring together different relevant resources and other aspects such as energy, drinking water, air quality, waste, mobility, green spaces, urban space, land-use, housing (insulation and/or social building), heating, education, economy, and employment within an overarching concept. The cities with integrated sustainability strategies are majoritarian located in the North and West of Europe, two Southern and only one Eastern city belong to this category. The elements of these integrated sustainability strategies vary in between the cases, depending on the concrete situation and challenges of the city.

These cities understand sustainability as basic principle for all city development:

"Municipal plans regarding sustainability issues: the overall vision is that sustainability strategies are the foundation for the city development, and must integrate social and human aspects as well as economic ones, in the planning of area, environmental and urban development. […] Sustainability has become the crosscutting theme of all other departments. The Committee for Health and Sustainability works with all the other departments to ensure that they consider and implement measures that can support the overall sustainability strategy." (Aalborg; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 9)

"Through development processes, we're also introducing a sustainable development policy within the council as part of the suite of planning documents, which would then make it compulsory on all future development in the city, to follow a sustainable agenda—our sustainable agenda." (Birmingham, a2, 66)

Membership in networks like the 'Covenant of the Mayors' plays an important role to some of these cities. Also the participation in (inter)national contests can provide motivation:

"Now all of this, waste, jobs, cutting emissions, looking at education and training, investing in science and technology of the green variety, environmental programmes have contributed to our having come second in the green capital bid for 2015." (Glasgow, a1, 15)

"There is the Covenant of Mayors, and all the Sustainable Energy Action Plan [...] we moved towards five lines that tend to sustainability that are: land consumption, building regeneration, sustainable mobility, sustainable development intended as sustainable economy and the fifth is […] promote quality of life and of the landscape" (Trieste, a2, 86-95)

Commonly, the sustainability strategies are divided up in sub-plans and single projects, defining measures to meet the targets.

"We define this in three major themes: We are aiming for the smart city, we are advocating for a concept called City Protocol which aims to acquire a commitment towards the management and planning of the city from an environmental point of view. And the third issue, we are aiming at the whole issue of resilience." (Barcelona, a1, 33-34)

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7   The term 'holistic' is used synonymous to 'integrated' in the sense that the strategy considers that the ceteris paribus variation of single parameters would influence other parameters of the city. The holistic view that systems function as wholes and cannot be entirely understood in terms of their component parts precludes this perspective.

"And the last decision relating to this was in 2007 regarding sustainable aims and measures of implementation in accordance with the Linz Agenda 21, for example. Of course, it was shaped by specific projects. […] The city expansion project, featuring around 1400 homes has been launched and evaluated in the meantime. It had goals regarding transport, supply, waste disposal and social diversity […] By now, the project is a benchmark in Europe, not to say the whole world." (Linz, a2, 94-95)

Education and public information campaigns are regarded as important elements of sustainability strategies and partnerships with businesses and civil society organisations are desired:

"This is a novelty that comes with the new Climate Plan 2012, following the mayor's wish to involve the private businesses more deeply. That is why we have a charter that allows us to get the private actors involved, especially with respect to energy consumption reduction." (Paris, a2, 39)

"A very important adjusting screw—and everyone from the field will tell you this—is education. Here actually everything starts what I meant by informing, sensitising. […] The churches are a big influencing factor, for example on CO2 reduction, because they simply have a lot of real estate here in Freiburg. [...] Indeed, adjusting screws can be identified, but the goals cannot be counterbalanced against each other. I would have mentioned integrated city planning as an adjusting screw, 'City of short ways', mobility and to consider everything together." (Freiburg, a2, 190-194)

"The city works in many ways for a sustainable future, not only though public campaigns, education and consumption, but also by the facilitation of green and recreational spaces in the city." (Copenhagen; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 17)

Agendas like Agenda 21 and Europe 2020 are taken up frequently and adjusted in the cities' targets. National regulations play another important role:

"The City Administration´s commitments are listed in local schemes and action plans (often made mandatory by state regulations) such as Agenda 21, or Climate-Territory Plan, Sustainable Energy Action Plan, etc." (Rennes; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 295)

"A special mention is due to Timisoara's PAED [Sustainable Energy Action Plan], which underlines 8 sectors considered as relevant. [...] [There] is a type of approach, in which we combine energy agricultural cultures with green spaces. [...] We try to rethink which tree species are resistant to draughts, to extreme climate conditions in order to plant them in Timisoara." (Timisoara, a2, 129-137)

"Yes, the long-term goals that the local government has raised, they relate to the growth in the number of people who will come here and develop Umea. […] Then there is equity, gender equality as important long-term goals. And sustainable social and environmental development. […] [W]e should build denser, we must expand the city in a way that allows it to be supplied with public transport, we must invest in public green spaces, we must invest in walking and cycling. Virtually ALL development in Umea shall take place within five miles of the city centre." (Umea, a2, 66)

These examples show localised strategies, which define targets and measures to meets these. A common understanding on the holistic nature of sustainability—with its dimensions economy, society and ecology—is visible within these strategies, emphasising that a socio-ecological transition cannot be achieved through one dimension alone. Energy transition is component of all these strategies.

2.2.2 Strategies for Resource Systems or Sectors

Municipal efforts to formulate goals and take measures on sustainability issues are often concentrated on the energy system, which tends to make climate change policy fragmented. Local initiatives to reduce energy use and change terms of transportation may primarily address congestion and air quality; nonetheless, they have mitigation effects (Alber and Kern 2008, 189;

Bulkeley 2010, 235). About half of the cities did define targets and strategies or programmes concerning key resource systems. Energy is element of all cities' sustainability or climate protection strategies. Goals are usually inspired by Europe 2020 and its "20/20/20" climate and energy targets. Further aspects frequently are mobility, air quality, waste management, urban spaces, drinking water or housing. The scope of the strategies in this category is quite diverse. An overarching integrated concept is missing, but still these strategies can contribute to sustainability transition significantly, as they are usually aligned to climate protection and energy transition.

CO_2 reduction measures are usually the heart of these climate change strategies:

"[…We aspire] massive reduction in carbon emissions and move toward a more integrated transport system through the city region which has been developed and move towards cleaner and greener energy and disposal of waste – all of which are part of a broad system of measures that are actually coming together now." (Leeds, a1, 84)

"The key actions in the city are built around strategic objectives defined for the Lodz voivodeship and include: development of local energy markets, increased demand for final energy, and decrease in low-carbon emissions, combined production of heat and electricity, promotion of renewable energy sources, creation of competitive markets for fuels and energy, increase in energy efficiency." (Lodz Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 111)

"[As goals] we will have, for example, one hundred per cent efficient power management, one hundred per cent efficient water management, one hundred per cent efficient waste management […] The inclusion of bicycles in the city is a criteria of sustainable mobility [...] And we are also achieving to leave cars at home encouraging more the public transport." (Madrid, a1, 95-100)

"The London Climate Change Action Plan[8] aims at reducing CO_2 emissions up to 60% [below 1990 levels] by 2025. Energy consumption in London for transport, domestic, industrial and services sector is mainly based upon fossil fuels, natural gas and electric supply. The Department of Energy and Climate Change of Greater London is currently focusing on research for energy efficiency through alternative resources to sustain the local lifestyle and environment of London city." (London; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 73)

Mobility, as measure to reduce CO_2 emissions, but as well to build a liveable city, is very important to many cities:

"The big themes are those of mobility, we have an impact with this mobility system based on the car that brings hours of traffic and of life spent in traffic, the second is all waste. We are still managing waste from the point of view of the emergency when instead we should move to a systemic management. [...] Another aspect is to contain energy, this is very important for Rome and many European projects endured the reduction of energy consumption." (Rome, a1, 67-70)

"The mobility policy is mandatory; CO_2 reduction is a basic issue in the city. We will not change the citizenship tomorrow.... The issue of waste is an issue that needs a lot of education […]. The big issue of noise pollution and CO_2 coming from cars and public transport. We will have to think about other combustion systems." (Bilbao, a1, 77-78)

For example, biodiversity, afforestation, rainwater management and urban development are important topics for some cities:

"The targets set by the city of Larissa and the municipal authorities are: 1) we want the 10 square meters of green space per capita to rise significantly […] 2) raising ecological awareness to all citizens […] 3) we also want to develop more open spaces in order to improve the quality life of the citizens [...]" (Larissa, a1, 81)

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8   http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/climate-change/docs/ccap_summaryreport.pdf

"The 2009-2012 Regional Government Housing Plan in the Autonomous Community of Valencia was implemented by the Government of Valencia with the aim of strengthening its power in the fields of housing and land. [...] [Amongst the themes are: promotion of] better building standards, as well as energy efficiency in the construction of public protection housing." (Valencia; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 243)

"Guaranteeing seawater quality, improving water treatment processes is also part of a transition, as well as reducing water and energy consumption in all fields we can have action levers." (Nice, a1, 22-24)

"Cracow is the first Polish city implementing a 'Small Retention Programme'. It contributes to the improvement of rainwater management by offering funding for creation of rainwater reservoirs by the city dwellers. This is to prevent flooding and to use the collected rainwater as a substitute for tap water, i.e. for garden watering." (Cracow; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 99–101)

"Biodiversity Charter was signed with major companies for them to protect their direct environment: they have to choose between 10 implementation points and commit to 6 of them. Moreover, the 'Zero Pesticides project' launched in 2007 is a policy of non-use of phytosanitary products within the CUS area." (Strasbourg; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 306)

"There is again and again covetousness to increasingly grab free spaces. However, at that point we are relatively strict and restrictive. Via the land development plan and the landscape plan, we are in the position to counteract also such covetousness." (Dortmund, a2, 96)

"We will try to secure those green spaces which are available in the city, e.g. in coordination with the climate adaptation strategy." (Kiel, a2, 120)

Especially energy and mobility play a major role for these cities, as these systems are understood as the "the foremost leverage to bring forward transitions towards sustainability, since a central aspect of climate change relates to CO_2 emissions, energy use, and global warming." (Sauer et al. 2015a, 50) The cities build their climate protection strategies around CO_2 emission reduction through renewable energies, mobility concepts that emphasise public transport and cycling or energetic modernisation. Most of the cities do have several plans for different resource systems or sectors. Commonly, these climate protection strategies or environmental sustainability strategies are not directly connected with social and economic goals and thus synergies cannot be used in an optimal way or contradictory decisions could result.

2.2.3   Single Projects and Programmes

A minority of cities merely implemented single projects or programmes to solve current problems. Their strategies are commonly concentrated on economic development and urban planning. Sustainability or climate protection aspects do play a minor role. In the cities' urban development strategies energy, heating, drinking water, or mobility might be relevant, but rather to solve infrastructural problems than by means of sustainability efforts. CO_2 reduction might be a secondary goal or a side effect of—for example—air quality improvement through mobility measures. Most cities of this category are located in Eastern Europe.

"Smart City Sibiu Pilot Project is a local initiative in cooperation with a major national specialised non-profit institution, The Romanian Energy Centre. The main objectives are: energy efficiency improvement – starting with the City Hall's edifice and continuing with a number of buildings belonging to the municipality" (Sibiu; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 139)

"The local government in Prague therefore started a subsidy project (Čistá energie Praha 2013), which offers subsidies for those customers who commit to use renewable energy." (Prague; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 93)

"Reducing the emissions of greenhouse gas for example, we contribute to the reduction of emissions by any project which rehabilitates a road, as it finally means also a small reduction in greenhouse gases." (Giurgiu, a2, 95-96)

"The project 'Reconstruction of district heating network in the city' has been implemented in Lublin. The main objective of this project is to improve the energy efficiency system of the Lublin Heating Company [...] by reducing heat loss along energy distribution networks. Furthermore, additional targets are going to be realized, i.e. demineralised water loss reduction, [...] decrease in primary energy consumption, improvement of the quality of urban air." (Lublin; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 119)

"Well I think that the most important goals/projects to be achieved for Thessaloniki at the local level are the following: 1) Creation of a metropolitan park combined with the removal from the city centre [...]. 2) Doubling of the suburban forest Seih Sou in size and volume. 3) Better management of the Thermaikos Gulf and organised supervision of marinas, creating an alternative transport/travel system that will be utilizing the city's waterfront. 4) [...] completion of the Thessaloniki Metro [...]" (Thessaloniki, a1, 86)

"[...] the implementation of an ExWoSt-planning, which has been accomplished this year in spring. This has also been a project[9]." (Saarbrücken, a2, 146)

Many of these cities face difficult economic situations and concentrate on the most urgent topics. Sometimes their infrastructures (for example streets or water network) are rather old and need to be modernised. Projects (sometimes co-financed by EU funds) are set up to catch up with European standards and solve pressing local problems.

2.2.4   Missing Strategies

One city does not follow a long or mid-term strategy or plan: "The local governments are in power only for five years. Policies begin with the mayor and end with him." (Istanbul, a2, 70) Sustainability does not play a role in the city's development plan, as "the government so far has no priorities in taking the necessary steps towards increasing the share of environment friendly renewable energy resources. On the positive side, legal framework regulations are being changed to enforce energy efficient and environmentally friendly buildings." (Istanbul; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 251)

In the sample of 40 cities, this absence of any climate protection efforts is an exception. Istanbul is certainly a special case. Turkey is officially not part of Europe and political structures are different from EU states or Switzerland. The relationship between the EU and Turkey has been changeable over the last decades and European Union's influence on Turkey is diminishing at present (Nathalie Tocci 2014, 4).

2.3   Taxonomy of Sustainability Strategies of 40 European Cities

To sum up the findings described in section 2.2, the 40 cities' strategies were categorised concerning the taxonomy presented in the section. Concrete measures and programmes are referred to, and environmental goals and time horizons were extracted from the material. The type of strategy is supposed to provide an overview over the main strategies the cities are pursuing.

Most of the researched cities advanced strategies for climate protection or even sustainability strategies. Some cities have chosen comprehensive agendas as an umbrella for their well-quantified sustainability goals and associated action plans. Many cities concentrate on climate protection plans through CO2 reduction and established corresponding agendas. Other cities have a patchwork of single programmes or projects and no overall strategy.

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9   ExWoSt-Projekt—Experimental house building and urban development—is a nation-wide model project concerning 'urban strategies for climate change'.

Table 3: Taxonomy of sustainability strategies of 40 European cities

Location	Category	Type of strategy	Measures/Programmes	Environmental goals	Time horizon
East					
Czech Republic					
Jihlava	3	CO2-Programme; Growth-Strategy	Green savings programme - CO2 (national); Economic Growth		
Prague	3	CO2-Programme	Subsidy for RE, Green savings programme - CO2 (national)		
Poland					
Cracow	2	CO2-Strategy; Land-Use Strategy; PM-Strategy; Rainwater Management	Low Emission Reduction Programme, Spatial Development Plan, Small Retention Programme		
Lodz	2	PM/CO2-Strategy; Water Programme	Heat, Electricity and Gas Consumption; SWITCH Project, LIFE+	CO2 reduction	
Lublin	3	Economic Development Plan; Heating Programme; Water Programme	Reconstruction of District Heating; Water Supply Modernisation		2020
Romania					
Timisoara	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Energy Strategy; Green Spaces Programme; PM-Programme; Urban Planning	Covenant of the Mayors; Sustainable Energy Action Plan; Reforestation; BIOTOWNS project; Integrated Program for Air Quality Management; General Urban Plan	"20-20-20" goal	2020; 2030
Sibiu	3	Urban Planning; Economic Development Plan; Energy Programme; Water Programme; Waste Programme	Smart City Sibiu Pilot Project; Rehabilitation of Sibiu's water supply and sewage system		2020
Giurgiu	3	CO2-Programme; Economic Development Plan	Master Plan for Development; RE approach; Integrated System of Solid Waste Management	CO2 reduction	2020
North					
Denmark					
Aalborg	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	Municipal Climate and Energy Strategy; Municipal Sustainability Strategy 2013-2016	Cut CO2 emissions by 40%; ensure 60% organic food in all public canteens; Aalborg port will be CO2 neutral; 100% recycling	2020

Location	Cat-egory	Type of strategy	Measures/Programmes	Environmental goals	Time hori-zon
Copenha-gen	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	Climate Plan for Copen-hagen 2025	become CO2 neutral; minimum 30-60% organic food in the public can-teens	2025
Sweden					
Gothenburg	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	EU initiative "Smart Cit-ies"; Celsius (waste heat utilisation); Environmental Program	reduce CO2 by 30% by 2020; reduce traffic by 30%	2020, 2035, 2050
Umea	1	Sustainability Strategy; Urban Planning; Energy Strategy; Mobility Strat-egy	CITY planning	climate neutral by 2018; sustainable population growth by 2050	2018, 2050
UK					
Glasgow	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	Sustainable Glasgow; 2nd place in the green capital bid for 2015	reduce CO2 by 30%	2020
Leeds	2	CO2-Strategy; Green Spaces Strategy	Low Carbon Cities Pro-gramme; Parks and Green Space Strategy	reduce CO2 by 40%	2020
Birmingham	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	Birmingham Mobility Action Plan; Birming-ham's Vision Statement	60% reduction in CO2 emissions	2026
London	2	CO2-Strategy; Water Strategy	London Climate Change Action Plan; Securing London's Water Future	reducing CO2 up to 60%	2025
South					
Greece					
Larissa	2	CO2-Strategy; Energy Strategy; Urban Planning; Water Strategy	"Saving energy at home" and "Saving energy in public buildings" pro-grammes; integrated management and reuse of wastewater	reduce CO2 by 20%; "20-20-20" goal	2020
Thessalo-niki	3	Urban Planning; Water Programme	"Integrated Coastal Moni-toring of Environmental Problems in Sea regions and the ways of their Solution – ICME"		
Italy					
Trieste	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	Sustainable Energy Ac-tion Plan; Covenant of the Mayors; City Develop-ment Plan		
Milan	2	CO2-Strategy; Mobility Strategy; Green Spaces Strategy	Sustainable Energy Ac-tion Plan; City Develop-ment plan for green areas	become a fossil free or carbon neutral city	2060

Location	Category	Type of strategy	Measures/Programmes	Environmental goals	Time horizon
Naples	2	CO2-Strategy	Sustainable Energy Action Plan; Covenant of the Mayors	25% CO2 reduction compared to 2005	2020
Rome	2	CO2-Strategy; Mobility Strategy; Waste Management	Sustainable Energy Action Plan; Covenant of the Mayors	reduce CO2 by 20% compared to 2003	2020
Spain					
Barcelona	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Energy Strategy; Water Strategy	Barcelona Energy Improvement 2002-2010; City Protocol; Rainwater Master Plan	zero waste and zero emissions	2050
Madrid	2	Energy Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Mobility Strategy; PM-Strategy	Energy Plan (launched 2013)	30% implementation of RE, CO2 reduction, energy saving, energy efficiency	2020; 2025
Bilbao	2	Energy Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Mobility Strategy	Sustainable Energy Plan; "Measuring the carbon footprint program in the organization" report	"20-20-20" goal	2020
Valencia	2	Energy Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Green Spaces Strategy; Mobility Strategy	Saving and Energy Efficiency Plan; Regional Government Housing Plan; Urban Mobility Plan; Covenant of the Mayors	"20-20-20" goal	2020
Turkey					
Istanbul	4	No Sustainability Strategy			
West					
Austria					
Linz	1	Sustainability Strategy; Energy Strategy; Green Spaces-Strategy	„eSESh – Saving Energy in Social housing"; Programme on the greening of the settlement area; Linz Agenda 21; Solar City		
Innsbruck	2	Energy Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Mobility Strategy	Energy Development Plan of Innsbruck; "Fit4set – New Energy Demo (Smart City)"; concept "Mobil 21"	reducing the overall energy consumption (without traffic) by 17% - 20% (basis 2009) with energy efficiency and savings; increasing the share of RE by 27% to 52% of total consumption; reducing fossils from 67.5% to 48%	2025
France					
Paris	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Green Spaces Strategy	Climate Plan 2012; Biodiversity Plan	CO2 reduction of 30%; set European "20-20-20" goal at 30%	2020

Location	Category	Type of strategy	Measures/Programmes	Environmental goals	Time horizon
Rennes	1	Sustainability Strategy; Energy Strategy; Green Spaces Strategy; Water Strategy	Agenda 21; Climate-Territory Plan; Sustainable Energy Action Plan	"20-20-20" goal	2020
Nice	2	Energy Strategy; CO2-Strategy; Water Strategy; Green Spaces-Strategy	Plan Climat Energie Territorial; Local biodiversity plan; Cit'ergies project		
Strasbourg	2	Energy Strategy; Green Spaces-Strategy; PM-Strategy; Mobility Strategy	Biodiversity Charter	set European "20-20-20" goal at 30%, apart from renewable energy	2020
Germany					
Freiburg	1	Sustainability Strategy; CO2-Strategy	Integrated city planning	reduce CO2 emissions by 40% until 2030 and to become carbon-neutral by 2050	2030, 2050
Dortmund	2	CO2-Strategy; Urban Planning	"Action Programme Climate Protection 2020"	40% reduction of CO2 emissions in relation to 1990	2020
Kiel	2	CO2-Strategy; Energy Strategy	Climate Action Plan; Integrated urban development concept	decrease CO2-emissions per capita by 50% based on 1990	2030
Potsdam	2	CO2-Strategy; Energy Strategy; Green Spaces-Strategy	Climate Action Plan; Climate Mitigation Concept	reduce CO2 emissions until 2020 by 20% on the basis of 2005; until 2030 public administration wants to work carbon-neutral, until 2050 they want to reduce CO2-emissions to 2.5 t/capita	2020, 2030, 2050
Saarbrücken[10]	3	Mobility Plan/Urban Planning	Residential Estate Development Plan; ExWoSt-Projekt – Experimental house building and urban development		
Switzerland					
Lugano	2	Energy Strategy; Urban Planning; Water Strategy	Energy Plan; Urban development plan	Swiss Confederation energy goals for 2050	2020, 2050
St. Gallen	2	Mobility Strategy; Energy Strategy	Energy Concept; City Concept	2000-watt society until 2050	2050

Notes: Categorisation concerning 1 - 'Holistic' sustainability strategy; 2 - Strategies/plans for resource systems or sectors; 3 - Single projects and programmes; 4 - Missing strategy.

10 In 2014 the region of Saarbrücken published a climate protection concept with measures to reduce CO2 emissions: http://www.regionalverband-saarbruecken.de/natur/klimaschutz/klimaschutzkonzept.html

2.4 Implementation, Limits and Measurement of Local Strategies

Urban strategies and goals concerning climate protection and sustainability described in sections 2.2 and 2.3 are quite different, depending on many factors. The implementation and accountability of strategies and goals is still not always adequate. The second research question 'How are sustainability plans implemented in the cities and what measures are used as communication instruments with citizens and other stakeholders to describe sustainability?' will be answered in the following section.

2.4.1 Implementation Gaps and Limits

Urban climate governance is complex and depends on the local challenges as well as on the reorganisation of political structures on multiple levels and between public and private actors such as civil society and business. There is often a gap between "the rhetoric and reality of urban responses" (Bulkeley 2010, 231). Failures are usually explained "either in terms of institutional capacity (for example, concerning the jurisdictional remit or resources of municipal authorities) or in terms of political factors (for example, the opportunities for political leadership or the degree to which addressing climate change fits with other social and economic concerns in the city)" (Bulkeley 2010, 242). Literature shows that at present, climate change policy is usually not a top-priority for most cities, but rather put back behind short-term goals. Barriers often are policy-based, like limited overarching policy frameworks or even policies or actions that obstruct local-level adaption. There is a strong cultural influence on habits and personal actions. Perceived uncertainty concerning climate change and split responsibilities within multilevel-governance systems further hinder climate change strategies (Carter 2011, 195–96; Sauer et al. 2015a, chapters 4-7).

Responsibility for climate change policy often lies with the environmental department/agency of the cities. This might impede the implementation of comprehensive concepts due to capacity and coordination problems, as climate change policy affects various other departments that should consider climate-related issues in their decisions as well. Funding problems are further strong barriers, as with limited financial resources sustainability goals compete with various other goals—like economic goals (Alber and Kern 2008, 173-174, 189; Sauer et al. 2015a, 79, 109, 138).

Limits of strategies or difficulties for the cities to meet their goals were addressed in several interviews and case studies. Several cities already missed goals or milestones or are sure they will not be able to meet their targets:

"According to the Madrid critical observatory of energy, the city did not meet its emissions reductions targets between 2004 and 2012. It needs to be seen if the new energy plan, which the city council launched at the end of 2013 will achieve its aims." (Madrid; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 233)

"Unfortunately, for the city the use of renewable energy at the local level is extremely limited. I also think it is very difficult to achieve the objectives of the European Union for 20/20/20, even if we get extensive assistance by programmes and funding." (Thessaloniki, a1, 53)

"For example, we may not have increased pollutants in the atmosphere, unlike other cities that have perhaps heavy industry, but, anyway, it is essential to go on with the necessary processes in order to reduce—even more—these pollutants, which result from oil combustion or burning woods during the winter. What, definitely, needs to be done, is to promote electricity production by renewable energy sources. […] These [EU 20/20/20] goals will not be met, anyway, as on energy issues we are way behind at country level." (Larissa, a4, 84-87)

"We are still at the levels of ideas that we are trying to develop in the council. We would like to develop an energy project, we are working, it's some years now, on becoming an 'Energy City[11]' but we haven't succeed yet, because there are some criteria." (Lugano, a1, 41-45)

"However, we had to show that we—although we can reach the 2000 Watt society—we will not reach the one ton CO_2 society." (St. Gallen, a2, 61)

These limiting factors might result from reasons within the administration, responsibility structure or legal frameworks:

"I thought then that I could do much more for the Municipality of Thessaloniki, but eventually the opportunities given to me were quite limited. This is because the municipality always lacked in political will, while the environment has always been somehow the occasional fashion and was never considered for the strategic development policy of the country." (Thessaloniki, a1, 36)

"A lack of coordination among the various organisations involved has created obstacles towards planning flood risk strategies for the city. The council has identified that without a clear statutory framework indicating the responsibilities of involved parties, the creation of a successful strategy is unlikely." (Leeds; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 63)

"What is sure is that the administration has some limits deriving from the fact that it is the planning actor but not the implementing actor, the implementation of the plan is then left to others, such as the port or the industrial zone" (Trieste, a2, 109)

"They made the attempt, but there I think they failed with something called the Environmental Program, which was supposed to be a plan for what to do […]. The environmental objectives are good, you might say. […] Then you fail, I think, in a very significant part when it comes to matching. Now, if we see these challenges—to match them with action. This environmental programme is very comprehensive and contains 280 points. [...] there is a whole lot like loose opinions that others should do things that you do not control yourself." (Gothenburg, a1, 35-39)

"The failures mostly had to do with political sidelines. [...] That is a typical political game, basically you have the same opinion, but then you remember that one or the other topic is missing and the resolution cannot be finished." (Innsbruck, a2, 37-39)

Other reasons for the lagging behind plans might be mobilisation problems or procrastination factors:

"The slowness [is obstructing], the time that passes from the decisions to the implementation, we should have instruments which allow us to be fast." (Naples, a1, 74)

"Despite its Climate Mitigation Concept, Potsdam has a rather low rate of renewable energies on its territory so far. Few solar panels were installed so far." (Potsdam; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 350)

"We do not talk about failure because we are not following the pace we would like to have, precisely because it is very difficult to mobilise the whole issue." (Madrid, a2, 38)

"The reconstruction of the transport system would take approximately thirty years because it really needs a significant change. [...]. In the inner city we would really want to support the cyclists, at some places also at the expense of parking. In such moments, you can expect huge waves of protest from the active citizens. Coming to such unpopular decisions takes a lot of political courage." (Prague, a1, 66-67)

Economic factors are as well highly influential on sustainable development:

"The economic factor dominates by far the environmental factor [...] and the decision is in favour of the economic factor." (Giurgiu, a2, 100)

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11 'Energiestadt' is a label granted by the Swiss Confederation to cities that are instrumental at achieving its energy goals for 2050 concerning sustainable municipal energy policy, renewable energy, eco-friendly mobility and efficient use of natural resources. http://www.energiestadt.ch/das-label/

"All the goals of the city are focused on the growth of the city and on attracting more people. Therefore, there are attempts to build more houses, attract investors, new companies – this is sometimes happening at the expense of green spaces as well as the environment." (Jihlava; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 82)

"Unfortunately, in reality, not all of them are approached in a sustainable manner; they are approached first of all from an economic point of view. The economic interest is essential. It is behaviour specific to poor areas." (Sibiu, a4, 28)

"The failures are evaluated differently. Politics are deciding eventually. From the perspective of politics, the decision to accept the construction of […] [a home-centre] in the green belt will certainly be regarded as a success. From the environmental point of view, I would consider it a failure [...]." (Kiel, a2, 48)

"This area [mobility] remains the most carbon intensive area of the economy and there is a real fear of making the city less attractive to cars that will have a knock on devastating effect on the economy. […] There is a very powerful lobby—that is a factor. It's a national thing as well; national governments have really shied away from the topic. […] I think, probably, around buildings and new developments that we are still very heavily influenced by the development industry, which will resist tougher targets for new buildings and so we are still allowing buildings to be put up. And in a few years' time we will have to go back to these buildings and retrofit them." (Leeds, a2, 33)

Limiting factors relevant for the researched 40 European cities can be arranged roughly in three categories: responsibility structure, mobilisation problems, and economic factors. Favourable legal frameworks and a high awareness of sustainability issues within society might be success factors to sustainability transition, as the described obstacles would not be present or could be overcome more easy (see also Sauer et al. 2015a, chapters 4-7).

2.4.2   Sustainability Measurement

Urban Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) are important means in target setting, performance assessment and enabling communication between policy makers, experts and public. Literature recommends cities to start with a short list of indicators at the beginning of strategy implementation and revise these regularly "according to emerging needs and gained experience" (Li-Yin Shen et al. 2011, 17, 26). SDI are increasingly used to allow assessment and monitoring of sustainability strategies, but the quite general definition of sustainability—and its dimensions environmental, social and economic—is causing a multiplicity of indicators. This leads to a lack of consensus and formally established methods concerning the use of SDI combined with constraints of data accessibility. Comparison of the levels of overall sustainability accomplished by different jurisdictions is thus virtually impossible through indicators that do not meet standard objectives (Georges A. Tanguay et al. 2010, 407, 410, 417). It could be speculated that many cities might have little intention to make such comparisons possible, as a rather bad ranking could interfere with city marketing. Some cities use sustainability reporting to account for sustainable development. Qualitative and quantitative measures can be incorporated in these reports, but these reports are still not very common.

One further impeding factor is the accessibility of data, although there are promising approaches to the field. The City Statistics[12] database (formerly Urban Audit) by Eurostat collects city level data (Eurostat 2010, 15–18). The indicators cover many aspects concerning quality of life (e g. demography, housing, health, labour market, education, and environment) of cities in the EU, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. As participation in the data collection is on a voluntary basis, available indicators differ strongly from city to city and topic to topic. Thus, comparison of a larger city sample concerning sustainability status was impossible, although the cities were

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12 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/cities/data/database

chosen with respect to their participation in City Statistics and a comparably good data situation[13] (Sauer et al. 2015a, 38–43). Environmental indicators of the 40 researched cities were fragmentary; especially CO2 data on city level is often missing.

As there is currently no panacea, some cities find individual measurements, fitting their needs, to communicate their status concerning their goals:

"The Green volume is assessed on a regular basis. This assessment was one of the measures in the Climate Action Plan. It is central for the urban adaptation capacities to global climate change." (Potsdam; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 356)

"The city council, through the municipal company Ekintza Bilbao, aims to raise awareness among companies to reduce CO2 emissions. The 'Measuring the carbon footprint program in the organization' report has been launched with 17 participating companies." (Bilbao; Garzillo and Ulrich 2015, 226)

"[W]e have the goal to realise the 2000-watt society until 2050. […] Every four years we make an environmental report." (St. Gallen, a1, 62)

"There were general total measurements for particulate matter [in the 1980s], which makes no sense and I was the first to suggest that we should do specific measurements for PM10, which are the ones that are the most harmful […] and only after 2000 this situation changed and we started metering separately the PM10." (Thessaloniki, a1, 36)

Other cities still face problems concerning the application of indicators to fit their requirements:

"Currently we are fighting about the accounting methods for the CO2 figures. If we honestly said: 'How does our footprint, our carbon footprint look?' There is much more to it than just somehow ... there is the production chain. We have not yet held this discussion. And so I think that will be difficult." (Potsdam, a1, 102)

"The stringent in Scotland we set the bar high and we do have a long term ambition of a state in increase employment. We do have a long-term ambition to take out many people, few poverty as possible. Do we have the quantifiable target for those? We don't, so it's more about the direction of travel than anything else [...]. Even then if you are looking at the city, how much carbon are you reducing, it is hard to quantify, you make kind of proxy type guess as supposed to clear identifiable numbers and figures. Those are that kind of things that we will judge to assess the sustainability." (Glasgow, a2, 88-90)

"Where I think that we do not have so good or not good enough goals—and are not so visionary—that is in relation to particle pollution [...] [We need to] start measuring more frequently how much particle pollution there is and make some clear goals how and how much it should be reduced." (Copenhagen, a1, 77-79)

There are many and complex interactions between urban activities and the physical environment, which may vary between the local, regional, and global scale. Between these levels, various interactions can be found (Zeev Stossel, Meidad Kissinger, and Avinoam Meir 2014, 498–99). The Europe 2020 Strategy concedes the necessity to focus on a comprehensive number of environmental, social and economic indicators (see Claudia Kettner, Angela Köppl, and Sigrid Stagl 2014, 6). Not all cities that did define sustainability or climate protection targets are able to measure the relevant indicators in an appropriate way. Nevertheless, the use of indicators is commonly accepted as control and communication instrument (see also Shen et al. 2011, 26). This can be supported by the interviews, showing that even in cases where measurement still is difficult, the awareness of its necessity exists. On higher levels (regional, national) the use of indicators is as well coupled with the problems described above, but on local level—with narrow spatial delineation—the data acquisition gets even more complex (María Yetano Roche et al. 2014, 523).

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13 A set of 26 indicators was considered to choose the 40 cities concerning data availability. From 275 cities represented in City Statistics, 89 cities were excluded for showing poor data availability.

2.5   Interim Conclusions

A sustainability or climate change strategy builds a joint framework for goals, implementation strategies and success measurement instruments. A variety of local programmes and projects to improve diverse aspects of sustainability can be brought together in one framework, which is supposed to allow for better coordination of these measures and a better measurement of the strategies' impacts. Generality, content and level of obligation may vary between these sustainability concepts. The application of urban SDI in monitoring the implementation of the goals defined in sustainability strategies is an important control instrument, but cities face various problems concerning these.

Most cities developed strategies for climate protection. Still, only one third of the cities implemented 'holistic' sustainability strategies—for not only climate change mitigation or adaption, but also including social and economic objectives. Merely in one sixth of the researched cities, no aggregated concepts could be found, but only single measures. Nonetheless, all 37 EU cities and the two Swiss cities take at least some measures. These are different in scope and ambition. The different strategies in some way reflect different understanding and valuation of sustainability issues and different capabilities.

Many local sustainability or climate protection strategies reflect the Europe 2020 targets of 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, 20% renewable energy, and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. The European Sustainability Goals obviously influenced many cities (see also Sauer et al. 2015a, 54). Urban Agenda was not directly mentioned in the interviews, but the principle of an integrated urban development programme shows especially in the 'holistic' sustainability strategies. The principles of territorial cohesion recommended by the European Commission (2010b, 28–30) were especially visible in Umea (see 2.2.1) along with other cities.

There are differences between the European regions in terms of a North-East disparity. Many Northern cities can be found in the category of 'holistic' strategies, whereas most of the cities with only single programmes were located in Eastern Europe. Reasons for this disparity might be economic and financial aspects, which play an important role in sustainability transition. The interviews also indicate that awareness for the need for a transition towards stronger sustainability and the citizens' personal interests in this topic vary strongly between these regions. This shows in administration as well as in civil society engagement (see also Sauer et al. 2015a).

For more than a decade, urban sustainability indicators have been discussed intensively in science and politics. Various indicators have been developed and applied: systems of individual biophysical or socio-economic indicators in absolute or relative numbers as well as composite indicators, aggregating several individual indicators to a single number. The requirements on the characteristics of such indicators differ, depending on the addressee of the information (e.g. political decision-makers, citizens, experts for the related fields, and scientists) and the spatial demarcation (e.g. local, regional, and national). There is a trade-off between validity and complexity of indicators on the one hand and feasibility and simplicity on the other hand. For many of the 40 cities, the availability of environmental data in City Statistics by Eurostat could be described as 'poor', although these were selected in respect to data availability. Thus, it is hardly possible to make statements on the local sustainability status of one city or compare the progress of transition of different cities amongst one another. Depending on local capabilities, especially urban sustainability indicators—used for the quantification of target achievements of sustainability strategies—should be designed as simple as possible to enable cities to measure these and stakeholder to understand them.

In chapter 2.4.1 the limiting factors of responsibility structure, mobilisation problems, and economic factors were carved out. These are clearly hindering socio-ecological transition, but seem to be predominantly on an operational level and do impede climate change or sustainability measures only in few cases. As sustainability is in that means not an end goal, but rather a pathway for cities to advance their social, environmental and economic conditions, obstacles belong to this way. European Sustainability goals and the European Commission's as well as

the national governments' activities for a sustainable development are a good influence on local decision makers. Necessary simplification and standardisation of framing conditions for such a transition should be promoted by an Urban Agenda.

3. Urban Agenda in Critical Assessment

This chapter evaluates the specific dynamics in negotiating and developing an Urban Agenda, which essentially facilitates a coherent policy in Europe that reflects the role and importance of cities in the European Union. Cities are a key factor in social, economic, and environmental aspects as well as in everyday life in any country. Therefore, a coherent framework for the fostering and sustaining of a socio-ecological transition is of utmost importance. The ever-growing relevance of cities, not only in the European Union, is explicitly clear if one visualises the growing number of inhabitants of urban systems. Nearly 72 % of Europe's inhabitants live in cities and towns—a number that is growing constantly. Above that the greatest share of economic wealth is produced and consumed in cities—also they have the severest impact on the environment in nearly all aspects; especially CO_2 emissions, energy consumption, waste water production and so on. All these aspects are brought forward, if actors want to emphasise the importance of a European Urban Agenda. The specific centre that cities take in European policies and politics is backed by their central role regarding development, wealth production, and overall living. It might appeal striking to the observer that, if cities are that important, no specific attempt has been made to focus urban spaces with respective policies. Therefore, the development history and the aim of the Urban Agenda are vital details to understand the role of cities that has been only recognised since several years.

The aim of an urban agenda is to empower cities to take responsibility and act to facilitate sustainable solutions for these challenges and to produce opportunities and eliminate problems. In a further sense, the Urban Agenda "can be viewed […] as a tool for the development of EU cities […]. It can also be understood in a wider sense as a vehicle to develop the EU by addressing societal challenges through policies adapted to the places and the actors most concerned." (European Commission 2014a, 2) The close interaction with the Europe 2020 strategy is a vital point for the Urban Agenda, since the Europe 2020 strategy itself lacks a detailed urban level and perspective. The main goal for an Urban Agenda therefore lies in the extension of the Europe 2020 goals and activating cities to contribute to these aims.

3.1 A brief history of urban agenda

As a political project, the Urban Agenda rose out of several initial processes, constituted by the European Commission as well as the initiative of stakeholders from several levels. The first steps toward an integrated program for the European Union were taken in 1997. An initial document sketched the urgency of a consolidated approach to bring together national urban policies at an EU level and combine it with a genuine urban perspective in European Union policies. This goal was central to explicitly address the challenges European cities are facing or anticipating (European Commission 1997, 3–8, 2014b, 8). However, the European Commission itself concludes that in 2014 "policy fragmentation persists, the complexity of urban challenges has increased, and the role of the local level in EU policymaking and implementation continues to be an issue for debate." (European Commission 2014b, 8)

The so-called Leipzig Charter (European Commission 2007) had a special impact on the discussions about a European Urban Agenda. This document "consider[s] European cities of all sizes which have evolved in the course of history to be valuable and irreplaceable economic, social and cultural assets." (European Commission 2007, 1) The recommendation for the urban systems should be the use of an integrated urban development policy that considers temporal, spatial, and sectoral impacts on planning. Above that actors from all societal fields should participate and be integrated in this process (European Commission 2007, 2). Figure 1 displays the overall development of the discussion on an Urban Agenda with specific milestones. It shows the road to an Urban Agenda, which took several steps and was accompanied by different charters, declarations, et cetera.
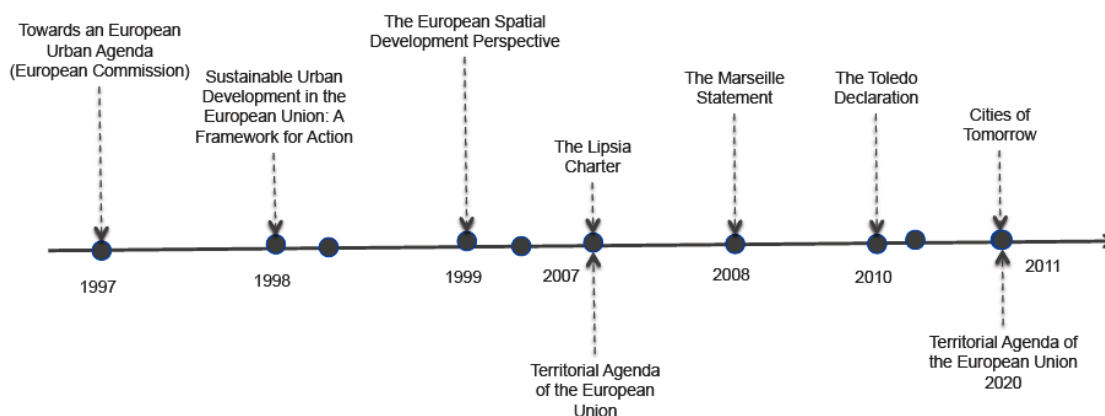
Figure 1: Milestones in an EU urban policy

Source: Antonio Calafati in European Commission (2014a, 6)

Although over the past 17 years a process created several milestone documents, meetings and declarations, the process in shaping and formulation of a coherent and sufficient Urban Agenda has not been completed. The most recent EU consultations aimed at bringing in a broader range of stakeholder and actors to the discussion. To advance the endeavours towards a unified Urban Agenda, a reflection process was initiated to involve potential stakeholder of urban systems. Therefore, a consultation process was installed that allowed stakeholders to participate and share their view on an Urban Agenda. The aim was to gather opinions, feature requests, and rationalisations on the agenda as a whole from any point of view of committed and concerned actors and stakeholders.[14]

The consultation relies on an input document, the 'Cities of Tomorrow' vision (European Commission 2014a). Several of the questions in the consultation build upon understanding this vision and directly ask about possibilities to extend an Urban Agenda with the insights from 'Cities of Tomorrow'.

3.2   Consultations on a European Urban Agenda

The consultation is displayed and interpreted in this section, following seven actor groups. Therefore, every group is analysed individually to allow reflections on the inherent logic of its specific field (Pierre Bourdieu 1993). In the sense of Bourdieu's argument, the inherent logic of each field is the chase for social positions that grant authoritarian power or social status. This drive is veiled to a certain extend and covered by a field's *illusio*. The illusio is suggestive and implies that the 'game' of a field, its aims and rules are meaningful and worth attending. It is important to recognise the different response rates for the groups. Since especially public administration has a very high response rate, its influence on the Urban Agenda and the discussed topics must not be overstated. For the democratic purpose of an instrument like the consultations, every entry should be respected equally and according to its own group.

In addition, the participants of the consultation were responsible for their own affiliation to the individual groups. Therefore, this might be a gateway for biased data, since it is possible that

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14 The feedback and reflection process in this EU Consultation is laid out in European Commission (2014b, 10–12) and consists of six open questions that inquire the need for a European Urban Agenda, its scope and function, its sufficiency and efficiency, stakeholders' contributions, the possible support and improvement for an overarching knowledgebase and what the roles and responsibilities should be.

self-understanding differs from the rather objectified categories, given in the consultation. Further, the seventh category 'other' is a residual category that yields hard to assess actors. Its content may be out of any context and is only for informative purposes.

In general, the questions given are open but standardised. This means, everyone who filled out a consultation form answered the same questions, either from his/her point of view or from a position of his/her institutional affiliation. The questions in brevity focussed issues of why an agenda is necessary, how a European Urban Agenda should be, and what scope and focus it should have. Further, how urban stakeholders can be integrated in the policy development process, how the understanding of urban development processes can be improved and how the implementation of the European Urban Agenda can be guaranteed was interrogated (European Commission 2014b, 10–12). The analysis and interpretation of the material followed these questions and outlined them in key headlines: rationale, scope, efficiency/effectiveness, contribution, support and improvement, and roles and responsibilities. These terms mark the direction the questions provide answers to.

3.2.1   Academia

The group of entries from academic institutions was a small one and consisted of seven documents. The focus in this group largely lies on knowledge factors and the exchange of experience. As a rationale for the introduction of an Urban Agenda, the answers denoted the importance for networking between cities and raise awareness about urban challenges. In addition, a framework for inter-city cooperation should be introduced with the Urban Agenda. On an intra-city scale, the coordination of involved and participating actors is stressed to pave the way for a "new post-crisis urban development". Urban systems are considered as the most important element to concert—with an urban agenda—an approach towards welfare standards, to fight urban disparities in social and economic aspects and search for adequate solutions. To achieve these goals a main value of an Urban Agenda lies in overcoming the prohibiting effect of policy fragmentation.

The Urban Agenda should aim at a general framework for all European cities. Within this framework—as stated by the contributors—emerging problems and challenges are brought up and included. The framework thus supports a live guideline, which has to be updated *in situ*. A broad request concerns the denomination of challenges and objectives that should be included in the Urban Agenda. Any policy should provide a coherent overview. Some statements point out that—against the openness—only a smaller set of challenges should be included to allow a more guided approach to solutions.

In regards of the EU Urban Agenda's efficiency and effectiveness, the academic contributors state that there is a need for continuously updating the agenda and the knowledge base accompanying it to ensure the agenda's improvement. This incremental 'growth' of the Urban Agenda serves the necessity for context and background knowledge to ensure local tailor-made solutions. For several contributors the 'Cities of Tomorrow' paper is insufficient. They see the need to enable participatory potentials of other actors and thus enhancing the deficient 'Cities of Tomorrow' document. Only then a solid Urban Agenda could serve its purpose as a framing guideline—and not be reduced to a checklist for urban development.

The potential to contribute to policy developments on the EU level is seen in a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes. Since each governance level has its own responsibilities, merging the two flows of information can better reflect the overall diversity of urban stakeholders and involve the local level in policy decisions.

To support and improve a stronger urban and territorial knowledge base and the exchange of experience, academic actors pronounce the importance of data availability and research infrastructure, like information channels, broad band internet and alike. In addition, qualitative data has to be acquired and quantitative data on all levels has to be gathered. A key factor is the collaboration of local research institutes, technical centres, and universities with other stake-

holders from economy, local administration, and civil society in producing, sharing, and exchanging knowledge.

Considering the roles and responsibilities of the different levels, an Urban Agenda should incorporate a multi-level governance approach with a dominant focus of the local level. Furthermore, it should give a voice to less privileged and ignored cities. In their contribution to design a European Urban Agenda, all levels should be integrated. Local governments are encouraged to form 'communities of interest' to initiate a local discourse on the local situation, needs and urges that can then be introduced in any planning process of an European Urban Agenda.

3.2.2 Civil Society

The civil society group is represented with eight contributions to the EU consultation. As a rationale for the introduction of an Urban Agenda, several different and rather abstract reasons were brought up. For example, it should be the aim to tighten cross-sector integrations of urban strategies and establish a long-term communication, networking, and exchange routines in multi-level governance. Furthermore, the urban system must be contextualised with its hinterland and has to be put into relation with its surroundings. Like in several statements from academia, an urge for closer bonds between research and innovation processes, policy-making, and urban development actions is pointed out. "It is […] the urban level where EU policies start to feel real to citizens and show their impact on them"—this suggests the practical dimension of urbanity and EU policies; especially in creating publicity for them and, further, for the project of the European Union. In this pragmatic direction aims the demand for a more integrated approach in form of an Urban Agenda that circumvents too many diffuse and perhaps contradictory measures.

In the eyes of civil society actors, the scope of an Urban Agenda should reflect a general framework that serves as a guideline. It should remain open specifically for individual urban issues; here the responsibility of the local level lies in outlining problems that are not covered by the general frame. One request is formulated in the coordination of sectoral policies and respective governance levels, since intersectoral approaches are considered very efficient. One entry rounds it up to three topics: "coordination, integration, and building" as the key issues for an Urban Agenda.

Hints for increasing the efficiency of the Urban Agenda are very diverse. They range from pragmatic aspects in the planning and making procedure, by—for example—using existing documents like the Leipzig Charta (cf. above) to the requirement of flexible policies for a vivid and adaptable urban system. In addition, the Urban Agenda policy should emphasise an integrated approach for urban development that encloses science in the policy-making. A great drawback is the lacking entrenchment of mobility issues and concepts in the paper. Another point mentioned targets the relevance of relations between urban and regional linkages that should be better reflected.

Civil society actors see the own contribution of urban stakeholders to a policy development as a vital part. There are ambitions to initiate 'vertical cooperation' from the neighbourhood level to the EU level in the planning processes and to involve cities more broadly in the policy-making on any administrative level. The General German Automobile Association proposes cooperation between civil society actors to consult the development process, especially in questions about urban mobility. Above all, the contributors express the need for a solid common basis to involve all actors equally and back it with a mediation process that negotiates the relation between subsidiary and hierarchical organisation. A thorough stakeholder involvement additionally needs high efforts in activating and including science to assist the urban policy-making with adequate qualitative and quantitative research data. Coherent and current data plays an important role for deeper insights in urban systems and the efficiency of any policy instrument and policy decision that is undertaken on any level.

Increasing a local knowledge base is supported by defining a common European methodology and standardisation that allows comparability of local data and knowledge, states an actor. The fragmentation of knowledge is one issue that prevents its efficient use: across sectors and scientific disciplines. On a practical level, actors describe the necessity for coherent tools and an adequate infrastructure to share, exchange, and comment on data in knowledge database like practical examples. With this, the learning capacities and cooperation potentials could be extended between the public sector and local communities. To create such knowledge, the actors suggest that research programmes, focused on "urban societal challenges", are necessary and need funding in order to extend the insight in urban dynamics on a local level with the necessary contextual approaches.

The role of the urban or local level in EU policies is to act as a gateway in implementing policies. This includes deciding how to implement as well as what to implement, according to a given framework coming from the EU. With this view at hand, the importance of participation of all relevant actors is visible: since the local level is the most fruitful locus of initiating and implementing (urban) policies, this is only possible with the approval, consent, and support of the citizens. Essential for any successful participatory process is a good communication structure that has to be established alongside the collaboration between all institutional levels in all directions. Another decisive advantage in the eyes of the contributors would be the early involvement of all potential actors and levels in any policy development process and later in the implementation phase.

3.2.3 Individuals

The third group covers contribution of 11 individuals, which means citizens, speaking for themselves without any visible institutional or organisational background. The results are very diverse, which could be due to the structural details of the sample. From an individual perspective, the rationale for an Urban Agenda lies in the pronunciation of other values over economic ones. In addition, the Urban Agenda serves on an institutional level as a "negotiating instrument between local, regional and central governments". This includes the sought aim for decreasing bureaucracy and corruption as well as levelling differences between Eastern and Western Europe. The thematic focus of an Urban Agenda should resemble around urban topics like mobility, waste, and energy as well as a more abstract topic of human well-being. The structural aspect of the Urban Agenda aims at establishing participation of citizens in planning, the definition of strategies and strategic interventions and to foster synergies between cities. This resembles under the umbrella of a holistic approach concerning means and issues of a socio-ecological transition.

The overall scope of the European Urban Agenda should be a general framework, following the majority of all contributions in this group. It should aim at new ways to organise public administration on different levels and produce a shared vision on "our society and our economic system". A controversial opinion reminds to focus on a selected number of challenges; otherwise, the Urban Agenda would become a bloated paper that is too complex to handle.

Only very few consultation entries on the efficiency and effectiveness of the urban agenda are useable. The reason for this lies in the specific question that asks on an opinion on the 'Cities of Tomorrow' vision, which is not necessarily known by individual citizens. However, several individuals see a gap between a talk-dimension and an action-dimension: "the problem is that we are fairly good at developing strategies, but not so good in their implementation". "Translating these insights into action, overcoming institutional inertia, counteracting lacking political will – these are the challenges which we have been facing for some time now." Citizens feel a strong but abstract resistance on an institutional level that programmes and policies have to cope with. Above that, the overall efficiency of the Urban Agenda is challenged by views that put more faith in other concepts like resilience. The lack of exemplary cases is a problem in the individuals' opinion that makes the Urban Agenda very unspecific, since practical appliances are missing.

In support for a knowledge base, the consultations state that especially communication channels for distributing the knowledge are essential. Especially when it comes to using the knowledge for training purposes, the infrastructure is a central aspect for gathering and distributing coherently. The form of knowledge base should follow several criteria like transparency, visibility, evaluation and the participation of public representatives to smooth the exchange of experience.

The roles of the local, regional, national, and European levels and their responsibilities in and for the development of an Urban Agenda are seen equally for all levels of administration. From the local to the European Union all levels should take active roles. However, the roles are seen differentiated: while the local level is especially capable of keeping records, providing data and ideas, and working on cases, as well as initiating communication in networks, the national level is seen as the instance that sets national targets and goals. The European Union should maintain, manage, and monitor the overall progress and performance of the implementation of a European Urban Agenda.

3.2.4   International Organisations

Consultations from international organisations made 13 entries. A central point actors articulate is the link from the local to the global perspective that should be facilitated with the Urban Agenda. Contrary to other statements, this group is the only one that relates to the global (international) level and surpasses the European Union. The goal should be to "convey the international sphere to the urban debate and vice versa". In addition, a coherent policy frame will advance the consolidation of urban policies. The cities face comparable challenges, although in specific individual realities. Therefore, a unified European Urban Agenda should foster the exchange of ideas via networks and a common knowledge base. However, the urban policy surpasses single cities alone, and has to reflect the interdependencies of different cities as well as cities and their hinterland. To allow a more substantial impact of an Urban Agenda, the proclaimed policies need to be more responsive: i. e. proactively influencing behaviour, rather than simply providing a framework for orientation.

In terms of the scope of a European Urban Agenda, the answers are quite clear that a general framework is the most sensible approach. Since the principle of subsidiarity limits the influence the EU has on lower levels, the EU can focus on dissemination, distribution and exchange of knowledge, experience and 'best practice' models. The impact of the policy on regional development in relation to urban development should have priority and increase cooperation across borders. In reference to the 'Cities of Tomorrow' vision, the Urban Agenda policy extends it with a temporal dimension of long-term priorities.

To assess and enhance the efficiency of a European Urban Agenda, the contributors generally pointed out a positive starting point in the recognition of diverse models of development, as well as a diverse set of actors that need to be recognised in order to assign and rely on their roles. Additionally, the overcoming of the urban-rural dichotomy and the recognition of peri-urban dynamics is a vital point in the European Urban Agenda. The heritage from the 'Cities of Tomorrow' vision is a reliable base that, however, has to be extended, e. g. with a long-term perspective, as stated above. On the practical level, the efficiency of the document could improve by providing dissemination instruments that foster knowledge exchange and the building of a common knowledge base. Finally, the lacking of mobility as a more central topic is criticised.

Urban stakeholders are considered to contribute best when they are directly involved in policy development by including the wider civil society in the process. As elements of complex territorial systems, cities and their actors have to take part in an inclusive policy-making process, which means it is necessarily a democratic approach where all actors or stakeholders have a right to participate and state their opinions. Another aspect is seen in better making use of existing tools to engage and consult stakeholders to participate in and contribute to policy development. Further, the concept of multi-level governance has to be operational to sustain the urban governance and its urban management, since only prosper and confident cities are capable

partners in networking relations. However, small and medium cities can profit from networks and use them as a voicing-option, if opportunities exist to communicate these voicing to EU decision-making levels.

Like in the other groups, the worth of a knowledge base is acknowledged and the best way to support and implement it is seen in the initiation of networking infrastructure, coupled with research programmes that provide means and methods to gather and refine empirical data for local usage and case studies. On a previous instance, the role and support from intermediary actors and organisation that link scientific research with policy-makers need to be extended and institutionalised. In the culmination of knowledge, its distribution through networks lays the key for a practical approach towards supporting cities in socio-ecological transitions. Further, this effort is a pan-European effort that heavily relies on the network form of an information, cooperation, and consultation level. On a broader base, an actor demanded that behavioural trends have to be included more directly in territorial planning.

The responsibilities are quite clear as well: the principle of subsidiarity, which places decision-making on the local level, possibly is a guiding principle in the majority of consultation contributions. For the European Union this means that it is a mediating, coordinating, and enabling level, which fosters the integration of the sectoral strategies, cohesion, and cooperation. Additionally the EU could provide specific tools for the implementation or planning of certain programmes, or strategies. However the process of policy development has to be seen as a bottom-up process that aggregates local concerns and interests and passes them on up. One statement explicitly criticises the model of multi-level governance: the contribution claims that it solely focuses on political and administrative authorities and neglects other actors, like civil society. Further, it confines to EU member states and does not exceed EU territorial borders. Additionally, it ignores space of flows and reifies the hermetic differentiation of the levels where tangled scalar relations are possible. Finally, it is prone to ignoring failure, and contradicting policies: it ignores completely the "tricky geography governance problems"—it is blind towards spatial attributes of its governance object.

3.2.5   Private Enterprise

The group of private enterprises is with four participants the smallest. Therefore, the results are not that much contrasted than in other groups. However, they allow insight in corporate realities and show how they are affected by European urban policies.

The rationale behind a European Urban Agenda for private enterprises affects synergies and is sought to produce an overarching vision that goes beyond administrative borders. Further, the European Union is efficient in providing support and standardisations that are facilitating local situative regulation. Additionally, the Urban Agenda can enable a holistic approach and provide a "level playing field for all players", which means that it provides a just and equal vantage point for any participant in a local socio-ecological transition. In the rapid development of urban systems, cities and their hinterlands must be focused, as well as the relevant local actors.

As scope, the four contributors demand a general framework with differing focuses: first, four main sectoral policies on water, waste, energy and transport should be considered as primary objective. Second, urban accessibility and governance issues are pinpointed. More general is a request that asks for a limited set of challenges for which the frame can provide coherence. The principle of subsidiarity allows only for a general framework, since the European Union cannot prescribe specific actions for any sublevel. Therefore, it has to generate a fertile environment in which the lower or lowest levels can thrive and solve their problems individually.

To increase the efficiency and the potential of the Urban Agenda and assess how productive the European model for urban development is, the answers indicated that especially knowledge and awareness must be extended. One distinct answer connects these issues with the political movement of 'Right to the city', that demands an emancipatory perspective on cities and to foster radical democracy. Further, as it has been stated above, the topic of accessibility is missing

in the existing policy but referred to as the central urban performance indicator. A contributor from the retail sector suggests that any efficient policy has to reflect the standing and the dynamics of the retail sector in urban systems. Structural changes, like the emergence of e-commerce, challenge this sector and therefore influence urban development. A last, rather pessimistic, outlook anticipates a rather small impact of EU policies on heterogeneous and diverse urban systems.

On the question how urban stakeholders can contribute to a better policy development and implementation, calls come up for a broader policy that covers all urban issues. Funding, as a steering vehicle, needs to be relocated or assigned to urgent matters and create an incentive for the adaptation and implementation of urban policies. In another case, a uniform approach towards governance structures is put forward. The retail sector enterprise reflects its position in the urban field and argues for its experience in the exchange and interaction with different actors in the cities.

Concerning the development of a common knowledge base, the contributors answer that especially the coherent integration of currently existing knowledge bases must be advanced. Further, too many programmes, policies, tools, and agendas exist that need to be thinned out to allow more orientation. Especially the agendas that promote a SMART city approach are criticised for their high degrees of lobbying and their one-dimensional orientation. Further, one entry articulates the need for an institutionalised exchange of the several different governance levels on a regular basis. Above that, the institutionalisation of individual participation in policy planning on all levels is an important factor that the contributor sees as substantial improvement of policy-making and implementation.

The roles and responsibilities in an Urban Agenda follow the principle of subsidiarity: all levels should play a significant role—their significant role, which means, they should decide according to their capability. The European Union therefore has to promote guiding principles to reach urban sustainability under the focus of subsidiarity rules that allow each level to formulate adequate and needed policies on their own.

3.2.6   Public Authority

The group 'public authority' is the biggest group in the EU consultation process. The reason for this is not clearly at hand, but it could be influenced by the dissemination of the EU consultation process. Administrative instances are closer to the dissemination of European Commission's participation tools and might have a clearer obligation to take part in the consultation process. Above that, the motivational aspect of participating in the feedback on an Urban Agenda is at hand, since any policy, wherever it is developed, directly affects administrative institutions and public authority first.

The rationale behind a European Urban Agenda is seen especially in the increase of governmental efficiency, for example by granting the coordination of EU initiatives or the general homogenisation of governmental structures. The agenda is seen as a possibility to reduce complexity in the governance level by clearer definitions of competencies and supporting coordination. Further, the Urban Agenda's focus should lie on preventing contradicting effects of several policies, as well as to provide and align tools to reach common goals, described in Europe 2020. Additionally, the focus of EU policies can be and should be extended by an Urban Agenda and must not be restricted to cities alone; rather an "Urban local Agenda" better encloses the relations in a targeted system. Topics an Urban Agenda should address vary between different contributors: social cohesion is as well a concern as transportation and mobility, networking and knowledge production, or increasing and ensuring competitiveness and productivity of the cities. The basic frame of a European Urban Agenda should be a close approach to participation and a transition from a sectoral to an integrated territorial perspective. Policy programmes that rely on citizens' participation have to shift their focus from differentiated views on sectors towards a place-based perspective. Any policy complying with this is necessarily focusing this place-based turn—and here is a central rationale for an integrated European Urban

Agenda. Along this challenge, the principle of subsidiarity has to be maintained: a contributor connects this to an instrumental perspective of the Urban Agenda, which is especially efficient, when it provides place-based options and tools that are autonomously implemented and applied in local contexts.

Concerning the scope of a European Urban Agenda, the focus is clearly following the principle of subsidiarity. Thus, the public administrations claim that especially a general framework has to be considered as optimal approach. Within this framework—as in any other contributions to the consultation from other groups—, the opinion on the spread differs: focussing a special set of problems or on a holistic approach of 'all' problems are proposed differently.

The efficiency of the Urban Agenda could be increased by different refinements. According to several contributions to the EU consultation, especially the clarifications of elements derived from the 'Cities of Tomorrow' vision are necessary. As well, the definition of objectives and tasks for sectors or actors is a point that should be facilitated by the document. Further, the governance framework implied by an Urban Agenda has to address unique and individual cities in their contextual problems and challenges. Several practical tasks are addressed that increase the European Urban Agenda's efficiency: for example by increasing the insight in urban systems with coherent and focused studies, by providing adequate instruments, and monitoring the individual approaches of a socio-ecological transition towards sustainability and to correct local dysfunctions. The Urban Agenda can also provide an inventory of the urban situation in Europe: for this aspect, it should support capabilities to take stock of the urban situations and—in a greater scale—evaluate crises and socio-ecological vulnerabilities of the cities. Based on the principle of subsidiarity, the call for local empowerment is a strong aspect in increasing the agenda's efficiency: steps to achieve this are seen in the emphasis on different local actors, and in opening channels in the vertical lines of administration for cities for their voice on higher levels. An interesting point made in all contributions is that an increased local sovereignty does not include 'citizen's participation' per se. The representative model is still strong with the public authority—and citizen's participation is perhaps seen as a potential threat to administrative authority.

Possibilities to contribute as stakeholders in a policy development process are manifold. They are providers of insight knowledge of the field and should display the situation of cities. In addition, the actors—here especially managing authorities are mentioned—need a better understanding of the urban perspective. The role of networks among stakeholders is stressed as vital part in initiating and maintaining cooperative endeavours. These collaborations target different levels: they ensure transparency in planning processes, or channel public will in aggregating opinions to collective positions. Additionally, the involvement in policy-making has to be facilitated; it should increase the understanding of the role of the city in an integrated European socio-ecological transition towards sustainability. Institutionalising efforts can be a possible way to sustain local transitions and cooperation processes. Establishing fixed communication channels creates faster exchange of cities with the EU level, for example. Above that, exchange boards and a coherent approach to multi-level governance are productive ways to enhance the efficiency of policies. The Danish cities, for example, are closely involved in policy-making due to their affiliation with several institutions, like the Committee of the Regions. Regulatory frameworks are an essential contribution to ensuring contributions to the policy-development process. Therefore, again, the principle of subsidiarity is mentioned as a driving and defining force that prohibits any legislative influence from higher levels. This stresses the importance of both vertical and horizontal approaches for an Urban Agenda. The role cities can take to facilitate the development and implementation on any policy and especially on urban policies, is considered very important. Since cities see themselves as programme promoters, the cities should be treated as subjects of activities, not as objects of these activities.

Coming to support and improvements that are proposed for the establishing of a common knowledge base, the arguments focused on communication to disseminate the knowledge and aid in improving the process. This knowledge has to be available for practical use; respective

means have to be acknowledged, e. g. networks or permanent platforms that serve the exchange. Further, the existing networks and programmes must be better linked together. On a practical side, the potential to adapt successful examples and experiences from the existing knowledge have to be developed and the capacity to gather and create knowledge has to be initiated. This calls for available data in a respective quality, especially to improve decision-making, and to accompany the implementation phase. Possibilities are, for example, expert or audit systems, evaluation processes, and respective indicators that have to be inquired on the local level. Finally, the matters of urban systems need an adequate representation: in the eyes of the contributors, there is an urgent need for central offices on national scale that represent local urban necessities.

However, the responsibilities of any socio-ecological transition have to be on the lowest level: "point of departure is the local level". According to the principle of subsidiarity, the responsibility for decisions and developments is put to the lowest possible level, where each level has its own roles in engaging in defining, developing, and implementing according to policy plans. "The different roles have to consider especially the strengthening of democracy, participation, transparency, accountability, and subsidiarity." A problem is the influential position the European Union takes in the development of coherent policies: first, local, regional, and national levels demand participation in this process, and second, the EU that guides and mediates this process should put an effort in consolidating the available instruments for cities and urban areas.

3.2.7 Other

The 'other' group is a residual category for entries that do not fit into the preceding ones. However, the contributors conducted the allotment—so the allocation to this group might be faulty.

The rationale for a European Urban Agenda is seen in varying aspects. First, tackling of challenges like gender issues, migration, and citizens' perception of the EU are brought up. Further, the Europe 2020 goals are mentioned, as well as tasks of networking, cooperating and implementing. Another point is the topic of urbanity and urban representation in EU policy-making in general, which should be tightened. Especially in optimising the approach towards urban challenges, the impact of an Urban Agenda is anticipated. Concerted approaches that reflect the diversity of city types, urban problems, and urban renewal types are needed, and optimally induced by an Urban Agenda.

The scope of the agenda is rather differentiated. A general framework is essential; it should be accompanied by a problem-cantered view on selected specific challenges that occur in urban systems. In a second stage, this is able to point out interventions that are more concrete. It should define priorities and generate tasks and timescales for their resolve. Contrary to this opinion, one participant of the consultation stressed the focus of industry as an agenda's target. Concerning timeframes, the contributions show that they are considered in this group, but rather in a rejection of short-term goals and developments.

How efficient an agenda can be and how this is increased is—stemming from the group and from their answers—diverse. A point is the introduction of other actors, other than public authorities, in the process. Their role has to be strengthened and institutionalised. A dedicated part in this group has a perspective for gender equality that proposes the better reflection of gender mainstreaming, especially to oppose male-default positions and perspectives as an alternative to traditional policy-making and policy implementation.

Contributing to the process of developing and implementing policies, a proposition states that the involvement of the Committee of the Regions to develop policies could be helpful. The introduction of "intermediate scales" as mediators between national or European levels and the local level is seen as a possibility to facilitate the processes. In general, the better integration of stakeholders in planning and decision processes is being demanded. Further, an exchange mode is proposed, to increase the networking between comparable cities, which creates common problem solving capabilities.

Support and improvement in the policy development process are promoted by smoothing the frameworks towards common standards. Further, the role of research cooperation between universities and independent centres with urban actors like administrations or from economy needs a solid database. Therefore, existing programmes like Eurostat, URBACT, or ESPON[15] should be extended and connected. Additionally, qualitative data is urgently needed. The dissemination of practical knowledge, practices, and success strategies is vital to enable a profound use of the results and strengthen the users in the field. Two contributors that call for means to integrate civil society in the planning bring up a more fundamental approach and decision processes on policies to produce more coherent and fitting results.

Concerning roles and responsibilities in the policy process, the local level is considered as very important and as an imperative actor in developing and implementing the Urban Agenda. The local level is considered as an active part and not as an objective part that is altered by the policy. It is important, that the cities are capable to act. The role of the European Union is to provide guidelines and supervision via frameworks. To provide and ensure a good quality of living, the local level is considered as the foremost frontier and therefore has to be strengthened and empowered.

3.3   Urban Agenda: An assessment

The varying contributions to the consultation process show a differentiated picture about the potentials of a European Urban Agenda policy. There exist different positions from which the Urban Agenda was assessed in the consultations—and they show differing as well as converging interests and potentials in the documents.

The largest group, public authorities, claimed a specific potential in the coordination of collaboration. However, the strongest emphasis lies on the principle of subsidiarity that stresses the autonomy of lower governance levels from higher governance levels. It is a vital aspect of European policy making that proclaims autonomy and self-responsibility. The principle delegates decision-making capabilities to lower levels—at least other than the EU. The administrative structure of any country has its own influences on self-determined and autonomous decision making, according to the degree of administrative decentralisation and the respective system of local government (Sauer et al. 2015a, 36–38). By restricting the European Union and the European Commission as its representative from influencing national, regional, or local politics and decisions, their autonomy is guaranteed. However, the European Union itself can edict policies to create a framework in which certain actions and processes are tipped into a common direction. European Commission's capability to alter or make legislative decisions is prohibited by the principle of subsidiarity.

The overall distinction between the groups of public authority and the six other groups lies in the emphasis of participation. This is perhaps the most interesting insight, since the administrative group has many contributions, which can lead to the conclusion that there has to be a systematic neglect of citizen's participation—at least regarding the increase of the level of participation. Where the other groups propose and request the integration of local actors in decision, planning, and implementation processes, this is not reflected in public authorities' statements at all. This affirms some results that were discovered in the ROCSET project—especially in the energy system (Sauer et al. 2015a, 57–62). There are manifold possible explanations for the overall phenomenon and its structural problems; however, they cannot be discussed in this paper accordingly, due to length restrictions. What is vital for an assessment of the European Urban Agenda is the structural neglect of channels of participation in governance structures in the view

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15 Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union and provides statistical data at EU level. URBACT's task is to enable cities for cooperation and to generate integrative, sustainable solutions. It collects and distributes experiences and forms networks. ESPON's primary task is to support the European Cohesion Policy on a regional level.

of most of the public authority contributors—which is a severe problem for any emancipatory potential a civil society wants to have.

All groups agree that an Urban Agenda should be a general framework with guidelines for urban levels. Differing ideas exist in the practical approach such a frame should take: a holistic approach is opposed by a predefined set of specific challenges that are addressed by an Urban Agenda. While an agenda that addresses all potential challenges is prone to be less directive and more diffuse, the drawbacks of an agenda that focuses on specific problems is missing certain challenges. This can be a problem, since the uniqueness of each city also produces unique needs. Therefore, a frame that relies on a few specific problems can be unsatisfying for several urban areas.

The potential to open a new perspective on the Europe 2020 goals for cities is not very prominent in the consultations. This might be because the timeframe is too short and a discussing of the goals is too late. The importance of an Urban Agenda has been seen in the relation it creates between cities as the central socio-economic spaces in a socio-ecological transition and their key role in realising the Europe 2020 goals. Further, the role of cities is only briefly reflected by the actors; the main rationale behind a European Urban Agenda is to foster their contribution in a successful socio-ecological transition. The overall development of urbanisation is recognised by the contributors, but the potential that lies in urban systems to influence a transition as well as the vantage point cities offer for realising climate goals, does not surface broadly in the consultations. Urban systems are considered as important spaces to make respective decisions for the local level that reach the populace fast and visible, as well as reflect the relation between urban and rural spaces in a new way. This last argument elaborates that this distinction must not be considered as a difference but rather as a relation: cities and their hinterlands are dependent on each other and can only be comprehended when their interactions are focused (Andrea Bonfiglio et al. 2014; Beatrice Camaioni et al. 2014). This can be interpreted as a new recoupling in a spatial system that especially emphasises the connection between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.

3.4   Interim Conclusions

A specific point about Urban Agenda is its role and its subject. Urban systems have to be considered in their importance for a socio-ecological transition and for reaching the Europe 2020 climate goals. This realisation has to take place on any level: the Urban Agenda is a single step for the European Union to acknowledge the important standing of cities; the next step has to be the awareness of individual and collective actors on the remaining levels; national, regional, and urban levels as whole. Along with this insight comes the empowerment of urban systems to make decisions self-determined and free from top-down paternalism.

Any policy and any societal constellation is no univocal and unanimous endeavour. Its strength is the productive discursive conflict of any democratic process. The potential of an Urban Agenda has to be seen in this distinct notion of democracy as open and institutionalised conflict that clearly neglects technocratic determination as well as strict representative understanding of politics restricting citizen's influence on processes only to elections. In a broader sense this is the conflict of two notions of 'democracy' that on the one hand see it as institutionalised consensus or the process of reaching it (e. g.: Jürgen Habermas 1984). On the other hand, it is a discursive *agonism*, which draws its social innovation from reoccurring contentions of hegemonial and counter-hegemonial positions (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe 1985; Chantal Mouffe 2000).

Any process introduced by an Urban Agenda should have in mind that information and awareness raising are central goals to create understanding in the populace. However, by restricting the policies to simple information distribution and education, not only the potential of civil society is wasted. It creates less specific and less efficient incentives to engage in a socio-ecological transition individually than an institutionalised channel for participation in administrative setting.

This means participation in decisions, planning, and implementation on the local level, where citizens are directly concerned and affected is left out for individual or civil society entry in political processes. This leaves a blind eye on the actual local constitution of the socio-ecological transition, since local insight is hindered. If this participation is limited, the notion of a cooperative socio-ecological transition is endangered.

The role of cities, as the ROCSET research project put it, is a complex one—and more basically its role and responsibility has to be reflected in European policy making. The Urban Agenda can be a first broad approach to this endeavour. However, in the process of policy-making several imbalances exist. Single persons are misrepresented, due to their position as lays. The agenda is prone to become a technocratic policy. There is an urgent necessity to reform a specific publicity that encloses several different foci of cities, such as 'living together' and 'working together' for an inclusive and cooperative project of urban transition. Cities and urbanity in its abstract notion are spaces of aesthetic perception, cooperation and (inter)action. A philosophical approach by Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* that sheds light on the acts of *poiesis* and *praxis* can provide a solid idea of the possibilities a critical publicity should enable (Hannah Arendt 1958). Her idea of labour and work as aspects of creating and altering ('making') the material world is supplemented by action, which means social and political debating that constitutes publicity. However, the idea is contradicted by factual societal developments that proclaim the decline of the public sphere, where open and critical discourse provides a counterweight to political and administrative decisions (Richard Sennett 1976; Jürgen Habermas 1989).

However, the possibilities to participate and to engage in a productive dissent with politics are eroding in the context of crisis of representative democracy and a transition towards "post-democracy" (Colin Crouch 2004).

A central result is the insistence of every actor group on a general framework and almost in the same instance on the principle of subsidiarity. The latter is a safeguard for autonomy that, however, ends on the national level for some countries. Additionally, it is a possibility to seek own and individual solutions. To some extend this contradicts the request for an Urban Agenda as a general framework. On the one hand, a framework supports the principle of subsidiarity, because it gives a mere guideline and leaves the actual realisation to the lower levels. On the other hand, a framework is responsive, restrictive, and limits certain legislative path dependencies while facilitating others. Here is the major problem: any Urban Agenda that targets a more thorough influence on urban development on the local level is watered down if the core request remains subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is certainly a key to empower lower levels, but as long as the principle of subsidiarity is not taken seriously and derived to the smallest entities, any urban policy from the European level is inherently contradictory. This means that the principle of subsidiarity must not stop at the national level but has to rectify centralism and its administrative omnipotence.

However, the unilateral focus on a multi-level governance perspective yields another problem: it is essentially governmental. Therefore, it cuts possible entry points for participation of civil society and citizens down and determines a representative form of politics that runs against the idea of a broad and cooperative socio-ecological transition.

4. Conclusions

Concluding the results from the ROCSET research on urban sustainability strategies with the analysis of the EU consultation on an Urban Agenda, it becomes visible that there are potentials for a European Urban Agenda. Especially in the creation of holistic approaches, the endeavour of a socio-ecological transition towards sustainability, the European Urban Agenda, can consolidate single measures or programmes to allow an integrated approach. This integrated approach is more directed to an orchestrated strategy with a potentially higher impact. The necessity of an Urban Agenda is broadly connected to a unified approach towards realising the Europe 2020 goals. Local strategies, as the ones reconstructed in the first part of this paper, can be integrated in a broader context of action with specific settings. Another factor is the complexity of urban development and existing urban policies—the consultations show that tools and programmes are complex, and sometimes contradictory. The possibility to create a framework for sustainability strategies is an approach to create leverage with a specific focus on the local level. Since policies and strategies tend to be restrictive towards place-based action, the Urban Agenda can and should focus on the individuality of the local level. This means that a substantial aspect has to be the principle of subsidiarity—and above that—the foundational reference of any strategy has to be the uniqueness of the local level. Creating a unified Urban Agenda can channel the local energies and smooth processes and programmes for a more simplified local action-plan.

Further, an integrated approach towards sustainability strategies and urban policies is a potential gateway for the inclusion of citizens, civil society, economy, and other local stakeholders in a common process. Innovative potentials can be increased when diverse actors are trying to solve problems; additionally, the synergies of cooperation are felt gravely: results are more likely to be backed by a broad coalition. Further, the discursive conflict can foster a healthy debating culture as well as a democratic approach towards problem solving and implementation.

A central intervention has to be seen in two points: first in empowering the potentials of urban stakeholders to engage in varieties of activities that serve and sustain a socio-ecological transition. Second the securing of a right (rather than a privilege) to participate in political processes. A third way would include the possibility to engage in self-organised projects beyond governmental structures—which need a certain right to exist parallel to common models of decision-making and participation. These self-determined spheres are of the highest degrees of autonomy and self-responsibility; therefore, they need a specific embedding in urban policies and—so to say—an institutionalised approach that grants anybody the possibility to be organised.

A central necessity for an integrated approach towards a socio-ecological transition must have a specific strategic approach—for every local entity. This means, a framework that unifies the efforts but leaves the realisation to the level with the best insight—the local—is a vital approach. However, as it has been shown in ROCSET research (Sauer et al. 2015b; Sauer et al. 2015a), the involvement of the citizens and other civil society groups is of utmost importance and has yet to be realised. Especially in terms of self-organisation and participation, the potentials are there and need to be put in use. Drastically, this is seen in the European Urban Agenda where the principle of participation in decision and implementation processes was not mentioned once by actors from the political authority. An Urban Agenda can assist in implementing adequate processes to open up channels for participation and discussion with a broad civil society.

Further, the efficiency of overcoming impeding factors, like political restraints or a lacking transitional basis, can be dealt with, when a holistic approach is available that allows to derive strategies for specific local settings and foster their implementation.

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Project Information

Welfare, Wealth and Work for Europe

A European research consortium is working on the analytical foundations for a socio-ecological transition

Abstract

Europe needs change. The financial crisis has exposed long-neglected deficiencies in the present growth path, most visibly in the areas of unemployment and public debt. At the same time, Europe has to cope with new challenges, ranging from globalisation and demographic shifts to new technologies and ecological challenges. Under the title of Welfare, Wealth and Work for Europe – WWWforEurope – a European research consortium is laying the analytical foundation for a new development strategy that will enable a socio-ecological transition to high levels of employment, social inclusion, gender equity and environmental sustainability. The four-year research project within the 7th Framework Programme funded by the European Commission was launched in April 2012. The consortium brings together researchers from 34 scientific institutions in 12 European countries and is coordinated by the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO). The project coordinator is Karl Aiginger, director of WIFO.

For details on WWWforEurope see: www.foreurope.eu

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	Utrecht University	UU	Netherlands
	Vienna University of Economics and Business	WU	Austria
	Centre for European Economic Research	ZEW	Germany
	Coventry University	COVUNI	United Kingdom
	Ivory Tower	IVO	Sweden
	Aston University	ASTON	United Kingdom