

Factors Influencing the Beginning of Municipal Government Policy towards Climate Protection

Willi Herbert and Katja Barzantny, Forschungsgesellschaft für umweltschonende Energieumwandlung und -nutzung mbH

1. SYNOPSIS

An in-depth study of the hanseatic municipality of Lübeck, a city in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein with about 200,000 inhabitants, was carried out with the goal of identifying and explaining the respective interrelation between the important factors influencing the establishment of a municipal strategy towards climate protection.

2. ABSTRACT

Studies undertaken in cities already engaged in an active CO₂-reduction policy showed that local energy policy can be decisive in resolving environmental problems in the industrialized countries. On the other side the vast majority of cities is not pursuing a CO₂-reduction policy until today. We therefore thought it might be interesting to do research not on a city already executing an active climate protection policy but on a city not yet executing such a policy but considering first steps. At the time of our analysis the city of Lübeck was at the beginning of an active municipal government policy towards climate protection undertaking first organisational steps inside and outside the city administration and making declarations to shape the future direction of a policy that aims for sustainability and CO₂-reduction. This process was evaluated ex-post mainly with the help of intensive oral surveys. The analysis concentrated on the administrative structures including the municipal works; the local political power structure; the motives and subjective goals of central actors of the administration, city works and city parliament; the influence of external actors and relevant utilities and their specific goals. The results can be divided into pure facts and analytical factors. The factors can have a supporting or hindering effect with regard to the establishment of an action oriented municipal climateprotection policy. The main obstacles we discovered include a lack of public attention and political consensus, an imbalance between professional competence and organizational responsibility inside the administration and the existence of adverse economic interests of a nation-wide operating wholesale company in the local area.

3. INTRODUCTION

There are cities pursuing an active policy towards CO₂-reduction and climate protection. But there are much more cities not pursuing such a policy. Studies undertaken in cities already engaged in an active CO₂-reduction and climate protection policy showed that local energy policy can be very decisive in resolving environmental problems in the industrialized countries. This implies that the lack of activities of the majority of the cities contributes to an increase of our environmental problems. From our research and our contacts in the field of energy policy and especially municipal energy policy we know that there are a lot more cities considering to engage in climate protection policy than those actually pursuing such a policy. There must be reasons and factors which prevent some cities from taking action against CO₂emissions and climate pollution. For that reason we thought it might be interesting to do research not on a city already executing an active climate protection policy but on a city not yet executing such a policy but considering first steps. At the time of our analysis the hanseatic town of Lübeck was at the beginning of a municipal government policy towards climate protection undertaking first organisational steps inside and outside the city administration and making declarations to shape the future direction of a policy that aims for CO₂-reduction. We hoped to discover factors favourable and unfavourable with respect to an active climate protection policy. At the worst we could at least discover some obstacles which are responsible for the fact that the process already stops before an action oriented municipal climate protection policy is institutionalized.

Before looking at the analysis in more detail I would like to make some short remarks about the German constitution with regard to the different political administration levels and to give a short description of the hanseatic town of Lübeck. The German federal system comprises a well-defined hierachic system with four or sometimes five political administration levels. In the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein with less than three million inhabitants (one of the smallest federal states (Bundesländer) of Germany) there exist only four levels. Besides the

Federal government and the State government, these are the country level (Kreise) and the local level. At the local level there is a difference in constitutions between towns (Städte) and municipalities (Gemeinden). Most of the towns or municipalities are partly administrated by a Kreis. In Schleswig-Holstein there are only four big towns not belonging to a Kreis. One of those four is the hanseatic town of Lübeck which has about 200,000 inhabitants and is the second biggest town in Schleswig-Holstein. Compared with smaller towns or municipalities in Schleswig-Holstein Lübeck is a territorial authority (Gebietskörperschaft) which can fulfill its municipal duties completely by its own. For reasons of history the towns in Schleswig-Holstein have a unique constitution, the so called Magistratsverfassung, which has an important influence on local politics dealt with later on.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The beginning of the process of the Lübeck municipal government policy towards climate protection was evaluated ex-post by analysing:

- the administrative factors including the municipal works,
- the local political power structure,
- the motives and subjective goals of central actors of the administration, city works and city parliament,
- the influence of external actors and their specific goals.

Those tasks were mainly performed via intensive and qualitative oral surveys with the help of so called textbook-interviews. In such a comprehensive, qualitative survey the person interviewed expresses itself in its own language and can discuss complex and distinct issues. The interview is thereby essentially directed by the interviewee thus remaining open for new or unexpected information. To guarantee that the same items are adressed throughout the various interviews with the various actors and thereby making a comparison feasible, the discussions were not conducted in a fully open format but rather as a textbook-interview. Such a kind of interview was necessary because some of the actors were chosen by the so called snow-ball system. That means that during an interview we asked the person interviewed about other persons who play(ed) an important role with respect to climate protection or energy policy of the city of Lübeck.

The persons interviewed can be classified by a combination of two dimensions: functional relevance and the degree of personal engagement. By the combination of those two dimensions we were able to define three groups of actors with different importance for the climate protection and energy policy of Lübeck:

- Central actors (relevant function and high degree of engagement)
- Important actors (relevant function but little degree of engagement)
- Engaged actors (no relevant function but high degree of engagement).

Because of limitations of time and money we had to restrict the number of interviews. We therefore decided to concentrate on the central actors and to prefer engaged instead of important persons. We hoped to receive more results by interviewing persons with a high degree of engagement. Pursuing only the important and engaged actors (category 2 and 3) we concentrated on external actors not directly involved with the political and administrative network of the town of Lübeck itself.

At the first step the interviews were analysed by those persons conducting the interviews and than cross -checked by other researchers involved in the project but who did not conduct the interviews. The pattern of the analysis was the same for all nine interyviews.

The analysis of the starting process of the municipal strategy towards climate protection in Lübeck with the help of textbook-interviews was of course completed by an intensive study of the existing literature, i. e. articles of the local newspapers, proceedings of organisations and institutions like the city parliament, the city parliament's committees on ecology and on city works, the Lübeck Energy Council (LEC), citizens' actions committees, public hearings and so on.

5. RESULTS: FACTS AND FACTORS

The results we received from our analysis can be divided into two categories. One category consists of pure facts and events like the local power structure, events concerning the energy policy and substantial actors, institutions and organisations in the field of energy and climate protection policy. The second part of the report tries to combine those events and actors and the interrelation between them to factors which may support or may prevent the starting process of a municipal climate protection policy in Lübeck.

5.1 Facts and Events

The municipal governmental system of the hanseatic town of Lübeck consists of the elected city parliament (Bürgerschaft) with 49 members and 14 so called senators. Six of the senators are professional civil servants and do not belong to the city parliament, 8 of them are honoraries, who are at the same time also members of the city parliament. This is a constitutional characteristic of the municipal constitution in Schleswig-Holstein which is called "Magistratsverfassung". As another characteristic of that constitution the senators are not elected by the majority of the city parliament but are divided among all parties of the city parliament according to their number of seats. The mayor is nominated by the strongest party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Together with the Green Party the SPD has the majority of the seats at the city parliament.

Lübeck has its own city works incorporated into the municipal administration. The city works produce only a very small amount (less than 10 per cent) of the necessary energy. Most of the energy supply is based on natural gas (1990: more than 60 per cent). The city works get nearly all of their energy from one of the biggest German wholesale companies, PreussenElektra. The latest energy-supply-treaty between Lübeck and PreussenElektra was signed in 1987 and covers a period of twenty years. On the one side Lübeck receives energy at a rather low price but on the other side this contract has some peculiarities. The treaty contains:

- a degression of the energy price,
- a strong demarcation between the supply areas of PreussenElektra and the Lübeck city works. The city works refrain from supplying the surrounding area with energy.
- Additionally, the city works bind themselves to obtain the energy almost completely from PreussenElektra. Only 10 per cent of the total amount of the energy needed may be produced by the city works themselves. If the city works produce more than that margin PreussenElektra can renegotiate the energy prices.

Especially the above mentioned treaty between the city works and PreussenElektra and the majority vote of the city parliament for it evoked some reactions of ecologically oriented members of the Social Democratic Party. Following this awakening three "ecological cornerstones" can be reported. In 1989 the Lübeck Energy Council (LEC) was created by resolution of the city parliament of the hanseatic town of Lübeck. It was composed of representatives from the scientific, economic and policy field both inside and outside of Lübeck. The purpose of the LEC was to advice the city parliament and city government at questions of energy policy and energy supply by including external knowledge with the aim to lower the use of energy in the long run and to reduce CO₂-emissions drastically. The elected members of the LEC met at 27 sessions. Besides that there were numerous sessions of additional working groups consisting also of none-LEC-members from ecological organisations, citizens' actions committees and so on. During its work the LEC made a number of recommendations, some of them were taken up by the city parliament of Lübeck and converted into resolutions. The LEC completed its work in June 1993 with the final recommendation to institutionalize a climate protection office inside the municipal administration of Lübeck. Until now this recommendation has not been taken up by the city parliament as a resolution. Another important recommendation of the LEC was, however, taken up by the city parliament. In November 1992 it passed the resolution on the introduction of linear electricity rates for private households as well as commercial and agricultural clients.

Another ecological cornerstone in the area of climate protection was the membership of the hanseatic town of Lübeck at the "Climate Alliance of European Towns with Indigeneous People of the Rain Forests for the Conservation of the Earth Atmosphere" dated back to September 1991. The membership is connected with a voluntary obligation to reduce the CO₂-emissions by 50 per cent until the year 2010 compared to the year 1990.

5.2 Substantial Actors

The substantial actors with respect to the climate protection policy of Lübeck include persons and/or institutions and organisations inside and outside of Lübeck. Because of the lack of one central institution or person being in charge of the energy policy or the climate protection policy there is a spectrum of different actors with different degrees of importance. Referring to the above mentioned combination of relevance and degree of engagement we can categorize the actors in the following manner.

5.2.1 Central Actors

The central actors are the city works, the city works committee of the city parliament, the wholesale company PreussenElektra, the energy department of the State government and the senators for forestry and for ecology.

Until now the city works are an integrated part of the city administration. The above mentioned peculiarities of the energy-supply-treaty and the fact that the city works are one of the few profitable parts of the administration make it clear that "profit making" was until now the main entrepreneurial goal of the city works. Therefore the change of the goals as part of a new corporate identity was of one of the targets of the Lübeck Energy Council and other ecologically oriented actors inside Lübeck politics. One member of the directorial board of the city works was also member of the Lübeck Energy Council. Our analysis revealed a reluctance to change the profit-oriented goal of the city works very rapidly although he communicated and cooperated in an open manner with the other members of the LEC.

The city works committee of the city parliament is the parliamentary organ being in charge of the control of the city works. This committee was used by engaged members of the SPD to take the issue of changing goals of the city works towards a more ecological direction onto the political agenda. Those members of the SPD also belonged to the main initiators of the LEC.

Although PreussenElektra is the second biggest German wholesale company it has many interests in the area of Lübeck. Besides the fact that it is the main supplier of energy it is conducting three other projects in the area. It intends to build a new power plant partly for the supply of one of the new federal states of Germany (Lübeck is located at the former border between the two Germanys). Additionally, PreussenElektra plans to build a new high power line which must pass parts of the area of Lübeck. And finally, Lübeck, located on the Baltic Sea, is supposed to serve as a coupling station for a huge ocean cable network which imports Scandinavian water power. These are projects of high importance for the company but for the public as well. Therefore the head of the public relation department of PreussenElektra was member of the Lübeck Energy Council.

In Germany all electricity rates have to be approved by the price authorities of the different federal states. With regard to the other projects of PreussenElektra the State government is involved at some points in the planning process. On the other side the social democratic government of Schleswig-Holstein declared a change of the energy policy as one of its main goals when it came to power in 1988. It declared to get out of nuclear power very rapidly and to favour energy efficiency, renewable energies and cogeneration.

With these intentions in mind the leading ecologically oriented social democratic politicians at the municipality of Lübeck opposed the energy and climate protection policy of the State government arguing that the State government cooperates too much with PreussenElektra and does not restrict the ecological disadvantages of the different projects of PreussenElektra. Especially the two female senators for forestry and for ecology have to be counted as the central actors for a climate protection policy inside the Social Democratic Party of Lübeck.

5.2.2 Important Actors

As important actors can be counted the mayor, the senator for economic affairs and finance, the senator for the city works, both belonging to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and the building department inside the city administration.

The mayor is the head of the administration of the city of Lübeck and could have been responsible for new impulses concerning the energy and climate protection policy. Our analysis revealed, however, that he as a member of the Social Democratic Party did not take up this responsibility although he was the head of the Lübeck Energy Council for the first two and a half years.

While the main social democratic actors in the field of energy and climate protection policy, the senator for ecology and the senator for forestry, showed a strong ecological orientation the main christian democratic actors were not very actively engaged in a climate protection policy. In former times and again nowadays (e. g. after the elections following our analysis) the political responsibility for the city works as a part of the administration rests with the senator for economic affairs and finance, the second ranked senator inside the city government. During the time of our analysis there was one senator responsible only for the political control of the city works. Both CDU-members were not engaged in an energy policy directed towards climate conservation or towards the reduction of CO₂-emissions.

The same conclusions can be drawn for the building department where the office for energy is located. The office is responsible for matters of energy installations and energy savings mainly in public buildings. Our analysis showed that this office was not able to engage intensively in activities reducing energy consumption because of the arrangement of competences.

5.2.3 Engaged Actors

Engaged actors are those actively engaged in a policy oriented by climate protection but without important political or administrative functions. Those actors include the members of the Green Party in the city parliament, members of the different local branches of ecological organisations (Umweltverbände) and members of citizens' actions committees (Bürgerinitiativen) as well as some elected members of the Lübeck Energy Council who are not living in Lübeck.

Because the Green Party had only two seats in the city parliament none of them could be elected as a senator. Our analysis showed no considerable activity in the field of energy policy by the Green Party, an effect which can partly be explained by the fact of the above mentioned active engagement of members of the Social Democratic Party in that policy field.

The different ecologically oriented "Bürgerinitiativen" and the local branches of the "Umweltverbände" were not members of the Lübeck Energy Council but sometimes active at the working groups of the LEC. The analysis pointed out that the policy of those groups can be described at best as confrontative and oppositional. Their strict anti-nuclear position forced them to fight mainly against PreussenElektra and the State government. They concentrated their activities on opposing all the big projects of PreussenElektra. At the beginning of the climate protection policy process inside Lübeck they were not willing to look for coalition partners among the ecological group of the "local political class". It was only in 1993 that members of those different groups and other persons founded the so called "Forum-Climate-Association" which ought to control the above mentioned obligations of the city parliament to reduce the municipal CO₂-emissions. This forum also intended to start a dialogue between the political and administrative system and the engaged citizens.

Engaged persons without lasting functions inside the political system of Lübeck were also members of the Lübeck Energy Council. Some of these elected members were regionally well-known activists in the field of climate protection and ecology. But because of the restricted time perspective of the LEC those people are labeled only as engaged and not as central actors.

5.3 Supporting and hindering factors

The motives and the degree of engagement of the different persons and institutions, the influence of the diverse facts and events and the interrelation between them can be classified according to factors supporting or hindering an energy policy aimed at climate protection in Lübeck.

5.3.1 Political and Administrative Power Structures

The peculiarities of the municipal constitution in Schleswig-Holstein lead to a quite chaotic formal distribution of power and responsibility within the field of energy policy. The combination of professional and honorary senators, for example, implies that at the time of our analysis the city works were under the control of the honorary CDU-senator for the city works. This senator is the head of only one department which together with other departments belongs to the tasks-main-group (Aufgabenhauptgruppe) of the professional senator for economic affairs and finance. The division of the senators according to the number of seats of all elected parties inside the city parliament sometimes results in a by-chance distribution of senators instead of a distribution according to clear political votes. In Lübeck the field of energy and climate protection policy is characterized by the ecologically oriented members of the SPD heading the departments of ecology and forestry on the one side and the CDU-senators for the city works and for economic affairs and finance on the other side. This implies the absence of one person or department being responsible for an ecologically oriented energy policy. In the long run these peculiarities of the municipal constitution in Schleswig-Holstein may be changed. At the moment a change of the municipal constitution is discussed at the federal state level. It seems possible that the automatic division among all elected parties which is part of the "Magistratsverfassung" will be abandoned. This should result in a chance for an ecologically oriented energy policy in Lübeck because there is a clear majority of the SPD and the Green Party at the city parliament.

An important administrative organisational change may come if the final recommendation of the Lübeck Energy Council will be institutionalized. Then there will be a climate protection office inside the city administration in charge of coordinating the different tasks.

5.3.2 Economic Incentives

At the time of our analysis the main goals of the city works of Lübeck were economic ones. On the other hand investments in improvements of energy efficiency and the establishment of energy service structures will be costly. This argument of cost effectiveness is very common because of the public budget law currently effective in Germany. The law defines a strict division between "Verwaltungshaushalt" and "Vermögenshaushalt". This phenomenon describes a different budgeting of operating expenses and public assets. One effect is that public actors have to deal with financial restrictions with regard to investments that are profitable only in the long perspective.

5.3.3 City Works and the Energy Supply Situation

The city works of Lübeck are part of the city administration and as mentioned above are economically oriented until today. This adds to the peculiar energy supply situation in Lübeck based on the treaty between the city of Lübeck and the wholesale company PreussenElektra. Lübeck receives its energy for a rather low price on condition that it restricts its own electricity production to 10 per cent of the demand. For that reason investments in renewable energy systems, cogeneration and energy conservation do not pay from an economic point of view.

5.3.4 The Citizens and Ecologically Oriented Groups

The ecologically oriented citizens in Lübeck and the diverse groups and organisations play the role of a more or less fundamental opposition. Their main opponents are external actors like PreussenElektra and the State government. The communication with the ecologically oriented actors of the established political parties on the local level is not very intensive.

5.3.5 The Influence of Large External Projects on the Local Level

The existence of some bigger projects of the wholesale company PreussenElektra in the area of Lübeck constitutes a decisive factor. On the one hand it puts issues of the energy policy of the State government into the local arena. Although the majority party is the SPD on the local level as well as on the state level the interests of the "local politicians in the field of energy and climate protection policy" and of these on the state level do not coincide. From a positive point of view, however, the acceptance of the energy-supply-treaty by the majority of the city parliament motivated the ecologically oriented politicians to start an active policy towards climate protection and CO₂-reduction on the local level.

5.3.6 The Lübeck Energy Council (LEC)

Among other things the engagement of ecologically oriented politicians led to the establishment of the Lübeck Energy Council. The LEC started its work in the middle of 1990 and completed its work in the middle of 1993. The LEC put the discussion on climate protection on the political agenda. The public became more attentive to the use of energy, communal energy policy and climate protection issues. The discussions among LEC members were led in an atmosphere of cooperation and the willingness to find compromises. Because of that and because of the exemplary voluntary commitments of some of the actors together with the first time application of the principle of cooperation the LEC may in the long run lay the foundation for an atmosphere of communication in the field of local energy and climate protection policy. On the other side the LEC concentrated too much on singular issues and lost side of its original conceptional task. With its final recommendation on the institutionalisation of a climate protection office the LEC came back to its original duty. In addition to that some other recommendations concerning structural questions like the rate policy of the city works may in the long run create hard facts with respect to organisational changes. We will continue studying if this new policy towards climate protection is pursued by the city administration and the city parliament of Lübeck.

6. WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM LÜBECK?

From the above mentioned facts and factors some obstacles to a political local process towards an active climate protection policy were elaborated. These obstacles may hinder the concrete process in Lübeck and in our opinion include a lack of public attention and political consensus, an imbalance between professional competence and organisational responsibility inside the administration and the existence of adverse economic interests of a nationwide operating wholesale company concentrated in this local area. We formulated four conditions necessary for such a process - which apply to Lübeck but to other communities as well. These are:

- A critical public opinion which is active not only against large external projects but also for concrete municipal energy goals.
- A party-crossing consensus in defining community energy and climate protection policy in order to have greater capacity to act vis-a-vis administration, city works and external actors.
- An administrative style that grants the engaged actors with specialised energy policy expertise competence to act as well.
- A long term existence of a community institution which will focus information and initiate communication in respect to climate protection matters.

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8. ENDNOTES

1. Our study is part of a series of studies to summarize experiences with the voluntary internalization of external costs of energy supply in the industry and the public sector. The main research-institute is PROGNOSE AG in Basel, Switzerland. The complete study is not yet published.
2. For Germany see Henschel 1993.
3. See LEB 1993 with more detailed references.

