Governance, Functions, and Traits of European Transnational Municipal Networks – an Evaluation by Means of German Member Cities

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List of abbreviations and acronyms
CCP Cities for Climate Protection
cCR carbonn Climate Registry
CDU Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CEMR Council of European Municipalities and Regions’
CO₂ Carbon dioxide
Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
EU European Union
Fedarene European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and Environment
G-20 Group of Twenty
GHG Greenhouse gas
ICLEI (formally) International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NGO Non-governmental organisations
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SME Small and medium-sized enterprises
TMN Transnational municipal network
UCLG United Cities and Local Governments
UN-Habitat United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Governance, functions, and traits of European transnational municipal networks – an evaluation by means of German member cities

SASCHA OPPOWA

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Abstract: As much as urban areas are centres of greenhouse gas emissions, cities hold a unique position in tackling climate change as they have legal authority over key sectors such as buildings, transportation, and urban planning. Recognising the benefit of coordinating activities on the local level, transnational municipal networks (TMNs) unite local governments across borders, providing particular services to its members. In Europe, there are several TMNs focusing on issues related to climate protection. This study examines four of these networks (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, EUROCITIES) and the functions they hold available. Interviews were conducted with representatives from the networks and a sample of German cities in order to depict both their perspectives. In terms of functions provided by the TMNs as a whole, lobbying for needs and concerns of the municipalities was considered as one of the networks’ main task. Further, two forms of lobbying were identified that varied depending on the respective network: lobbying, including mayoral support; and lobbying on a technical level. In addition, interviewees valued the exchange of information and experiences that these networks enable and foster. Lastly, their role in project management was stated as an important reason for network membership. A TMN-specific analysis revealed that ICLEI’s main strength was seen in lobbying on international level for its members’ concerns by also involving its member cities’ mayors. Municipalities seemed to turn to Energy Cities and EUROCITIES with regard to lobbying concentrated at EU decision-making, project cooperation, and the exchange of information. Climate Alliance’s unique selling point – since none of the other networks was associated with this function – appeared to be in organising awareness raising events and campaigns in cooperation with its members.

Keywords: sustainable development, multi-level governance, transnational municipal networks, network governance, climate protection, lobbying

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Summary: Urban areas are said to be responsible for up to 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, thus contributing largely to the anthropogenic, that is human-induced, climate change. Most of the sources to global warming are related to energy consumption, which is why the building and transportation sectors as well as urban planning are key. The successful sustainable management of these sectors may yield stark emission cuts, and thereby alleviate the human impact on global warming.

Joining forces with networks that are dedicated to climate protection gives municipalities a variety of shared benefits. By representing their members, these transnational municipal networks (TMNs) can speak with a uniform and powerful voice that is heard in international and European politics, which is how they attempt to influence policy-making in their favour. Furthermore, the networks pool capacities and experiences that cities, in turn, can draw on if necessary. Additionally, network staffs are equipped with expertise on project management that they offer to the local governments. Thereby, municipalities can focus on implementation, while the TMNs undertake administrative aspects.

Since this study was interested in an evaluation of these very functions, interviews were conducted with spokespersons from four European networks (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, EUROCITIES) and seven German cities that, respectively, are members in at least two of the TMNs. Through this approach, both the supply and the demand side of these services could be assessed.

This thesis finds that member cities perceive to be well represented on a European level by these TMNs, by effectively advocating their concerns to EU institutions such as the Commission. Furthermore, respondents from local governments valued the information gained from network activities, both in terms of what ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES provide, but also through exchange with peers during network meetings. In addition, interviewees from cities appreciated the work the TMNs took over in joint projects. Moreover, the study revealed that the cities are using the four TMNs for different reasons. Whereas ICLEI’s main strength was attributed to lobbying at the international level for its members’ concern, municipalities seemed to turn to Energy Cities and EUROCITIES with regard to lobbying concentrated at EU decision-making, project cooperation, and the exchange of information. Climate Alliance’s unique selling point – since none of the other networks was associated with this function – appeared to be in organising awareness raising events and campaigns in cooperation with its members.

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1. Introduction

“Breaking news: #COP21\(^1\) cancelled as cities have put the world back on track” (Energy Cities, 2015a). On April 1, 2015, Energy Cities, a European network of local authorities dedicated to sustainable energy issues, headlined a news article on its website that further stated:

“In a short but very emotional speech, UN Secretary General congratulated local authorities for their outstanding achievements in reducing CO\(_2\) emissions and pollution, improving energy efficiency and making the best of their local renewable energy sources. In light of this, the United Nation Organisation has decided to cancel the COP21 that was supposed to be held in Paris at the end of the year. “There is no need for such a conference anymore. Cities have done what we couldn’t do at this governance level”, Ban Ki-moon says.”

Obviously a hoax, this April fool’s joke was published just a few days after European mayors met in Paris to discuss their role in climate actions. This was a high-level conference by some of the major European cities such as Paris, Vienna, Brussels, Copenhagen, Athens, Rome, Stockholm, Berlin and Berlin. Furthermore, it was also attended by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the COP21 Laurent Fabius and European Commissioner for Climate Action & Energy Miguel Arias Cañete – showcasing the meeting’s significance (Energy Cities, 2015b).

Both the fake press release and the mayoral event in Paris share some interesting and insightful similarities, which will be illustrated by referring to parts of the declaration jointly issued by the mayors.

First, “we [the European capitals and metropolises] are addressing the major causes of greenhouse gas emissions: polluting transport, old and/or poorly isolated buildings and energy supply” (The Guardian, 2015). This is the cities’ demonstration of both showing and taking responsibility, acknowledging their large contribution to global greenhouse emissions, but also clarifying their willingness to act. Moreover, it is a showcase of European cities’ demand for unified leadership.

Second, “time has now come for European capitals and metropolises to pool our efforts to tackle climate change. This requires a closer dialogue between cities through a more regular exchange of expertise and good practices” (ibid.). This is a strong indication that in order to effectively cut emissions, a common approach and coordination on local level is required.

Lastly, “we must build on our networks of cities and local governments involved in climate action to create new global governance” (ibid.). In line with the statement before, coordination and cooperation between municipalities is sought through the work of European cross-border urban networks.

In summary, these are examples of an increasing self-awareness that European cities embrace concerning climate change. To manifest their goals, municipalities call on professional networks, which in turn also leads to their proliferation.

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\(^1\) COP21, the 21\(^{st}\) Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is an international conference on climate change to be held in Paris early December, 2015.
1.1. Aim and purpose
The aim of this thesis is to analyse the cooperation of a sample of German cities with ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES – identified here as the major transnational municipal networks (TMNs) in Europe dedicated to issues of climate protection. Further, it attempts to explore the sample’s cities’ specific use of these networks, and their perception of the functions provided by the TMNs.

Thus, this paper follows a fivefold interest. First, the TMNs will be assessed in terms of their governance, as well as further classifications to describe their workings. Also, the effectiveness of their network governance will be examined. Second, since the majority of the sample cities are members in three of the four TMNs, this study analyses the functions that the sample cities draw on. In this step, it will be looked at what the networks as a whole can provide to their members. Because of these cities’ multiple network memberships, this part of the analysis only considers what they are getting out of the TMNs, regardless of whom specifically. Then, third, each of the networks’ characteristics, based on statements both by representatives of the networks and by the cities, will be given in order to provide a diversified and individual depiction. This leads to, fourth, the question of whether the TMNs cooperate or compete. Lastly, it will be analysed which networks these cities mostly work with and the reasons for this.

In sum, the study is guided by and will conclude with answering the following research questions:
1. How are the transnational municipal networks of interest (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES) governed in practice? How can they be further classified? How effective are they?
2. These networks provide a range of services to their members. Which of these services are used the most by the sample cities?
3. What are the individual traits of each of these networks?
4. Do the TMNs compete or cooperate?
5. With which networks do the sample cities cooperate the most (network focus and involvement), and why?

Investigating these issues will give a coherent insight and overview of both the types and extent of the cities’ cooperation with the transnational municipal networks.

1.2. Outline
Firstly, a background will be given on cities in climate change. The share of cities in total greenhouse gas emissions as well as, deduced from that, their position in climate politics will be briefly explained. Furthermore, the unique role of municipalities to effectively tackle climate change will be depicted. This is followed by an overview of the emergence of European transnational municipal networks and examples of their actions at an international and European level. The third chapter outlines the theoretical framework chosen and applied for this study. The fourth chapter will present the methodology, method, and research area of this project used to gain empirical data. Interviews conducted with representatives of both networks and cities are presented in the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter presents a discussion based on the findings of this study. The thesis will end with a conclusion.
2. Background: cities, climate change and climate politics

This chapter will contextualise the role of municipalities\(^2\) with regard to climate change. Although global in its nature, climate change has severe impacts on the local level. Further, the unique position that cities hold both in terms of their contribution to total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and their capacities to make changes on the ground will be illustrated. This will help to comprehend their self-conception proclaiming a leading role in climate politics. Proceeding from there, in turn, it will lay the grounds for understanding the context in which transnational municipal networks (TMNs) thrive and work. They seek to bundle their members’ interests, enabling these networks to speak with a stronger and more powerful voice than cities could do on their own.

2.1. The bidirectional relations between cities and climate change

2.1.1. The impacts of climate change on cities

Climate change, as defined in Article 1 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), means

\begin{quote}
&a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods\end{quote}

(UNFCCC, 1992, p.3).

As such, it is a global phenomenon, posing an overarching threat. Urban areas are especially susceptible to its consequences for several reasons (World Bank, 2010). For one thing, cities are immotile given their huge infrastructure in terms of streets and buildings, but also their citizens’ entrenchment on site. This may most apparently be true for urban settlements in coastal areas that are at risk of rising sea levels. For another thing, cities highly depend on imports and therefore, are vulnerable to intermittences in supply chains. This includes food and water supply, but also stretches to energy and information technology provision. Particularly the former resources are directly impacted by climate change, which in turn needs to be considered by cities and municipalities.

2.1.2. The impacts of cities on climate change

Globally, the main sources associated with emitting the most are sectors that heavily rely on fossil fuels: energy and electricity supply, transportation and industry (UN-Habitat, 2011). At it, generating electricity and heat takes up the largest share with contributing nearly a quarter to global GHG emissions (24.6%), followed by land-use change\(^3\) (18.2%) and both transportation and agriculture (13.5%), while waste-related emissions account for 3.6 per cent (ibid., p.38). Activities within these sectors are concentrated in urban areas. As such, cities also contribute largely to the anthropogenic share of climate change (Gordon, 2013). Urban areas take up 4 per cent of the earth’s surface, while being home to half of the world’s population (UNEP, 2014, p.14).

Furthermore, individual emissions per urban sector can be added up in order to make a point about the total contribution that municipalities add to global GHG emissions. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme’s (UN-Habitat) report on the interactions between cities and climate change attributes 60 to 70 per cent of global GHG emissions to cities, which mainly derives from energy consumption by their citizens (2011, p.VI). The World Bank even assumes 80 per cent to be stemming from urban residents (2013, p.1). The

\(^2\) ‘Municipality’ refers local governments in their function as “legal decision-making representatives of a town or a city” (Gustavsson, Elander and Lundmark, 2009, p.63).

\(^3\) Land-use change refers to an altered utilisation of land, which – in this case – leads to increased GHG emissions, e.g. through urbanisation.
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Stern Review echoed this common conception of cities accounting for around 70 per cent of total GHG emissions.

2.1.3. The TMNs’ problematisation of urban contributions to climate change
Starting from this premise, urban networks such as ICLEI make use of the – what Michele Acuto labels – “75 per cent rhetoric” (2013, p.843): “Already today, cities are estimated to emit 70 percent of the world’s energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. These global trends need local responses right now.” (ICLEI, 2015a) As it will become evident throughout this paper, the documented responsibility of cities in climate change is used to frame their stake in climate negotiations and politics, with reference to both their responsibility as well as a their leading role. Besides, it serves as leverage, which TMNs use to reinforce their claims.

“Problematisation, in this sense, was a two-fold and open-ended task: on the one hand, advocating the nature of the issue (climate change) as an urban-driven question while, on the other, suggesting not only the privileged position of cities as repositories of innovation, but also demonstrating that such skills existed and were in place. This was a process that necessitated a translation of global concerns into the localised language of planning, architecture, and urban public policy.” (Acuto, 2013, p.840)

2.2. Cities’ unique position to deal with emissions
While energy-intense activities are focused in urban areas, their management falls – to a varying degree – under municipal authority. This puts local governments in the unique position to take actual actions and effectively tackle the main sources of climate change. In its latest Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) outlines these capabilities of sub-national policies with regard to mitigation (2014). Working Group III notes, among others, the possibilities for local governments to experiment innovative policies within a limited field of application, thus enabling “learning by doing”. Additionally, the report lists their flexibility in adjusting to new developments more quickly, as well as the great mitigation potential of federal structures due to their jurisdictions over sectors such as land use planning, building codes, waste management, and transportation. Lastly, the IPCC highlights that

“subnational governments may tailor actions and policies to people’s needs, with an easier identification of priorities and difficulties as they are closer to citizens than more centralized administrations” (2014, p.1183).

2.2.1. Modes for cities to govern climate protection
In order to analyse the mechanics of local governments, Bulkeley and Kern identify four modes of governing (2006, p.2242). They depict “the set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes” (Lemos and Agrawal, 2006, p.298), in pursuit of a public good (environment and climate). This overview (Table 1) provides valuable insight into different opportunities for cities to govern, which is particularly helpful to understand the role of municipalities in climate protection.
### Table 1: Modes of governing climate protection (on the basis of Bulkeley and Kern, 2006, pp.2242-2251)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Self-governing</th>
<th>Governing by provision</th>
<th>Governing by authority</th>
<th>Governing through enabling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By means of</td>
<td>Organisational management</td>
<td>Practical, material, infrastructural means</td>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Persuasion, argument, incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Implementation of energy efficiency measures in and use of renewable energies for municipal buildings</td>
<td>As major shareholders of municipal utilities (&quot;Stadtwerke&quot;), local governments exercise power over infrastructural services such as energy generation, public transport, and waste</td>
<td>Regulations in terms of land use planning, transport, and waste</td>
<td>Promotional activities, public–private partnerships and the provision of financial incentives or subsidies to encourage action by other actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By way of example, these modes will be applied to the sectors contributing most to climate change. This demonstrates the potential that municipalities have in terms of reducing their carbon footprint.

With regard to the GHG emissions by buildings, the most effective measure to energy efficiency is retrofitting older buildings in order to decrease their energy demand. Special programs run by cities can encourage homeowners by monetarily incentivising the implementation of insulation or renewing the heating equipment. Furthermore, municipal utilities, which are energy suppliers dedicated to provide energy to urban areas, are (partially) owned by local governments. Thereby, they can have an influence on the promotion of renewable energies. Land-use change, identified as second biggest emitting sector, is heavily influenced by the development of cities because the specifics of urban planning determine the transformation of rural landscapes. Thus, for instance, incorporating ideas of density help reduce urban sprawl and preserving green areas. Additionally, municipalities can reduce emissions of transportation through fostering and promoting public transport, and avoiding urban sprawl since density determines, to a large extent, the distances travelled by its citizens within the municipal perimeter. Emissions from waste, although currently not being a large factor, are expected to increase. They can be tackled by local governments, for instance through implementing landfills that capture rather leak methane.

### 2.3. Municipalities joining forces – the rise of TMNs

In 1992, 108 heads of states and some 2,400 representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at the “United Nations Conference on Environment and Development”, which would become known as “Earth Summit” (UN, 1997). A summii it was indeed, as it marked a culmination for the environmental movement, which had begun decades ago: Environmental concerns were put on the agenda of states, receiving international and – more importantly – formal recognition. The Earth Summit saw the birth of three legally binding agreements; the “Convention on Biological Diversity”, the

The Earth Summit also resulted in Agenda 21, an action plan for sustainable development, although voluntary in its nature. Most importantly for municipalities, Chapter 28 states that “Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives” (UNEP, 1992).

This denotes an explicit expression by the international community that environmental concerns are deeply ingrained at the local level – both in terms of its sources and fixing it. This awareness of cities and municipalities and their role in tackling ecological issues can partly be ascribed to transnational municipal networks (TMNs) – cross-border associations of urban authorities. Cities, mostly from North America and Europe, had realised two important aspects: First, they conceived their responsibility and impact on the environment and climate. And second, they recognised that in order to address these issues and make a difference, they would have to join forces.

The environmental movement brought with it a boom in the launch of related urban networks; between 1982 and 2004, the number rose quickly from 8 to 49 worldwide (OECD, 2010, p.266). It was in 1990 that three TMNs dedicated to sustainable development and climate change were founded. Particularly after the Earth Summit 1992, they would grow largely in terms of members and influence (Hakelberg, 2014): ICLEI, originally signifying “International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives” while nowadays only using the slogan “Local Governments for Sustainability”, considers itself an international association of “Local Governments for Sustainability”. It also hosts regional offices, among them a European branch (ICLEI, 2015b). Energy Cities and Climate Alliance both started as European networks, whereas the former is dedicated to sustainable energy (Energy Cities, 2015c), and the latter solely focusing on climate change (Climate Alliance, 2015). A fourth network, EUROCITIES, dates back to 1986, but in contrast to the other networks, “environment” and climate-related topics are one of six priority areas that EUROCITIES is concerned with (EUROCITIES, 2013a).

These networks – ICLEI, Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, and EUROCITIES – will be the main focus of this paper.

2.4. TMNs promoting the urban role and cities’ interests

The Earth Summit had marked an acknowledgement of urban actors in terms of sustainable development. Since then, the role of municipalities particularly in climate action has received increasing attention at the international level. Much of this is the result of the TMNs’ work: Uniting and representing hundreds to thousands of members endows these networks with a political standing to successfully advocate urban interests in several spheres and scales, which will be illustrated as follows to demonstrate their efficacy and achievements.

2.4.1. TMNs’ lobbying efforts at the international level

Cities have been seeking to put international focus on the municipal agenda and the role they seek to play in international politics since the first Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1995. In order to appeal to global politics, urban conventions organised by TMNs often imitate their equivalents on national level, such as the “World Mayors Summit on Climate” (see below). Furthermore,
many of their declarations follow “canonical international law and UN consuetudinary practices marked a series of preambulary acknowledgement paragraphs” (Acuto 2013, p.842). In addition, TMNs often organise side-events at COPs, publically promoting the local level. The following shall briefly give an overview of the most important milestones of the representation of urban issues on international level:

- In 2005, imitating the G-20 (“Group of Twenty”) meeting consisting of the world’s 20 major economies, the “World Cities Leadership Climate Change Summit” was hosted in London, bringing together mayors of 18 metropolises. There, the C40 was officially launched (for a description of this network, see below).

- At the 13th COP 2007 in Bali, a coalition of local government associations (among them: ICLEI, EUROCITIES, Energy Cities, the Climate Alliance, and C40) launched the “Local Government Climate Roadmap” (ICLEI, 2015b) with the goal to “ensure recognition, engagement and empowerment of local and subnational governments in the new global climate regime”.

- At the 15th COP 2009 in Copenhagen, C40 organised the “Copenhagen Climate Summit for Mayors”. This event was both mimicking as well as criticising the nation states’ COP. The meeting’s slogan “Cities act - we must, we can and we will.” (C40, 2009) implies three messages: First, it emphasizes the need to take up mitigation actions. Second, it implicates the inactivity and unwillingness of national governments with regard to tangible results of climate negotiations. And third, it expresses the conviction and ability of local governments to actually make a difference in greatly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- Before the 16th COP 2010 in Cancún, the “World Mayors Summit on Climate” convened, seeing the introduction of the “Global Cities Covenant on Climate” (or “Mexico City Pact”), in which signatory cities committed to voluntary actions related to adaptation and mitigation (WMSC, 2010). In addition, the carbon Climate Registry (cCR) was launched, serving as a platform for local governments to declare greenhouse gas reduction commitments, emission inventories, and mitigation and adaptation actions (carbon, 2014).

- The 19th COP 2013 in Warsaw featured a “Cities Day”. A high level event drew attention to the role of sub-national governments in climate actions, having, among others, the COP19 President (H.E. Marcin Korolec), the UN Secretary General (Ban Ki-moon), and UNFCCC Executive Secretary (Christiana Figueres) participated (ICLEI, 2014a).

- At the “UN Secretary General Climate Summit” in New York 2014, C40, ICLEI, and the “United Cities and Local Governments” (UCLG) jointly announced the “Compact of Mayors” to further enhance adaptation and mitigation actions (ICLEI, 2014b). Whereas initiatives such as the World Mayors Summit on Climate stem from committed cities presented by their mayors, the Compact of Mayors specifically turns the spotlight on the TMNs initiating and driving it, thus showcasing their relevance in global climate actions.

2.4.2. Recognition of the urban role: international level

On the part of nation states, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), at its 16th session, “Recognizes the need to engage a broad range of stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels, be they government, including subnational and local government” (UNFCCC, 2011, p.3; italics added).

This constitutes a milestone for urban actors, as this equals to a formal recognition of their potential in effectively reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, it states the necessity to
include them if the UNFCCC’s “ultimate objective”, that is the “stabilization of greenhouse
gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic
interference with the climate system” (UNFCCC, 1992, p.4), is to be achieved. It remains to
be seen to which extent the role of subnational governments will be embedded in the
agreement to be decided on at the 21st session of the COP at Paris, 2015, serving as the
follow-up of the Kyoto-Protocol.

2.4.3. Recognition of the urban role: European level
At the European level, the rise of TMNs is the result of eager interaction of both a top-down
approach of the European Union (EU) and a bottom-up movement of local actors seeking to
enhance their role as political actors. This trend of Europeanization manifests threefold.
Considered as “top-down vertical Europeanization”, legal and financial instruments largely
affect the local level, especially in the realms of environmental and climate policies (Kern and
Bulkeley, 2009, p.312). As opposed to this, “bottom-up vertical Europeanization” denotes the
grown influence local authorities exert on the EU directly rather than lobbying through their
respective national representatives (ibid.). Along with it, “horizontal Europeanization”
describes the increasing cooperation of European municipalities – especially in the shape of
TMNs, not limited to national borders, but rather seeking trans-frontier exchange in light of
similar issues and contexts local authorities are faced with (ibid.).

Synergies are intended and promoted by the EU, with subsidiarity being a pillar of the EU’s
fundamental mechanics. It is a system “which entrenches the de-centralization and de-
concentration of powers, allowing state, regional and local governments more powers to react
and adapt to pressing policy issues such as climate change” (Giest and Howlett, 2013, p.342).
The ‘Covenant of Mayors’ is evidence of an increasing European acknowledgement of cities.
Initiated in 2008 by the European Commission, its goal is to support municipalities to
sustainable energy policies. It has to be understood against the backdrop of the EU’s ‘climate
and energy package 2020’, which states the EU’s commitment to “to reduce its CO₂ emissions
by 20% by 2020, as a result of a 20% increase in energy efficiency and a 20% share of
renewable energy sources in the energy mix” (Covenant of Mayors, n.d., p.1). Hence,
municipalities that become signatories of the Covenant agree to also cut their own emissions
by at least 20 per cent by 2020 and thereby playing their part to contribute to the EU’s overall
achievement.

Closely related to understanding the workings of the EU and shifting competencies and
authorities, the Covenant of Mayors is considered as an example of operative multi-level
governance. This concept will be explained in the following chapter, since it will also help
understand the TMNs as interplay between European and local level by circumventing the
national level.
3. Theoretical Framework

In the following, the theoretical framework employed shall be illustrated. It mainly comprises two governance concepts to comprehend the mechanics of transnational municipal networks (TMNs): the aforementioned multi-level governance and network governance. The former serves as tool to understand both subnational actors and their role in (global) governance, as well as “highlight the multiple forms of government and governance in world politics” (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006, p.154). However, it is a theoretical approach that does not account for the workings of TMNs in practice. Further, the multi-level governance approach can only be used to describe the TMNs as an instrument of governance in the political system. Since this does not give any indication about the management of these networks, the concept of network governance is used to depict their functioning and illustrate their internal governance.

3.1. Multi-level governance

Before describing multi-level governance, the concept of governance itself will be briefly presented.

3.1.1. The concept of governance

To encompass the shift in policy-making where the state is no longer the only stakeholder, the phrase “from government to governance” made a circuit in political research. Governance, thus, finds several definitions. In a rather broad interpretation, “‘governance’ relates to any form of creating or maintaining political order and providing common goods for a given political community on whatever level” (Risse, 2004, p.289). To James Rosenau, governance still involves governmental activities, but “it also includes the many other channels through which ‘commands’ flow in the form of goals framed, directives issued, and policies pursued”. Command shall be understood as controlling or steering to “highlight the purposeful nature of governance without presuming the presence of hierarchy” (1995, p.14). In his attempt to incorporate the key meanings, Rhodes stipulates “governance refers to self-organizing, interorganizational networks” (1996, p.660). First, this notion includes non-state actors and describes the interdependence between involved stakeholders. Second, network members are in continuous interaction, which – third – are regimented by rules the network members agreed upon at the outset. Fourth, this definition denotes that these networks are not liable to governments. Marcussen and Torfing also highlight the mutual dependence, but also account for a diversified landscape of various political actors. They state “governance aims to capture the sense of an increasingly differentiated polity, i.e. a polity divided and fragmented into a variety of interdependent public, semi-public and private agencies” (2003, p.3).

3.1.2. The development of multi-level governance: describing the scales of the EU

The concept of multi-level governance has experienced a growing research interest with regard to the EU (Marks, 1996; Bache 1998; Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003). It is especially useful for this paper’s analysis of transnational municipal networks (TMNs), which seek to influence European policy-making and strengthening the role of local governments: Multi-level governance allows for an efficient processing of heterogeneity by enabling decision-makers to adapt the respective necessary scale of governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2003). This is also reflected in the Treaty on European Union, where, in Article 5, the “principle of subsidiarity” (EU, 2010) is stated. In this case, the EU shall only interfere if an intervention allows for a more effective solution than it would be possible on a national, Member State level – or, in other words, policies on a level as close as possible to the citizen are preferred.

Hence, having the European Union in mind, multi-level governance was originally thought of as a “system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers –
supranational, national, regional and local” (Marks, 1993, p.392). It implies that policy-making involves several actors and takes place at spatially distinct and geographically separated sites – “but, at the same time, its most vital feature is the linkages that connect levels” (Stephenson, 2013, p.817). Figure 1 illustrates the several layers local authorities are embedded in.

![Multi-level governance framework for cities](image)

**Figure 1 Multi-level governance framework for cities (in: OECD, 2010, p.207)**

One of the advantages of multi-level governance as a concept is seen in the circumvention of the national level: “[this approach] bypasses the nation-state and gives local authorities the opportunity to take a position that may go against that of their national governments, thus illustrating that the nature of climate change governance cannot be read hierarchically” (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006, p.151). Furthermore, “cities can help to translate the issue of climate change into considerations that have traction with local publics (air quality, public health, traffic congestion and mobility, disaster resilience, livability)” (Gordon, 2013, p.289). In regard to the benefits in comparison to the state level, the German Advisory Council on Global Change noted “the potential of city networks lies in the fact that they are able to work together better than nation states, because they build relationships at the personal level, have local legitimation and are more solution-oriented, so that they collaborate more effectively” (WBGU, 2014, p.86).

### 3.1.3. Multi-level governance: describing transnational municipal networks

In order to account for a transforming governance architecture, Hooghe and Marks (2003) differentiate between two types of multi-level governance. Type I commonly refers to federal systems; governance occurs at multiple tiers and is performed by formalised administrative entities (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2007). These structures are durable, as they are embedded within constitutional arrangements. They may take shape at the sub-national (municipal, local, regional), national or inter-national level, hence jurisdictions are bounded to a limited number. Memberships are often nonintersecting, as boundaries are territorial. In short, in Type I multi-level governance “every citizen is located in a Russian Doll set of nested jurisdictions, where there is one and only one relevant jurisdiction at any particular territorial scale” (Hooghe and Marks, 2003, p.236).
In contrast, Type II multi-level governance is characterised by task-specific jurisdictions and is established for specialised purposes. As a result, jurisdictional boundaries overlap, can stretch through various levels, and as such memberships are intersecting. Its flexible design allows to quickly adapt to potential changes of the issue, which the governance form was shaped around in the first place. Type II multi-level governance is commonly “dominated by networks between public and private actors across levels of social organization” (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2007, p.449). In brief, forms of Type II governance are similar to task forces, driven by the pursuit of solving specific problems, which is the specific case of the TMNs examined in the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type I</th>
<th>Type II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General-purpose jurisdictions</td>
<td>Task-specific jurisdictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonintersecting memberships</td>
<td>Intersecting memberships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurisdictions at a limited number of levels</td>
<td>No limit to the number of jurisdictional levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemwide architecture</td>
<td>Flexible design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Types of multi-level governance (adopted from Hooghe and Marks, 2003, p.236, italics in original)

In summary, Type I spotlights the “tiers of authority”, whereas Type II draws attention to the “spheres of authority” (Betsill and Bulkeley 2006, p.150, italics in original).

3.1.4. Polycentric systems

The concept of multi-level governance indicates that authorities and politics are dispersed and multi-layered. Furthermore, the polycentric approach highlights that decision-making hinges on several independent hubs where decision-making takes place. It is defined as a system “where many elements are capable of making mutual adjustments for ordering their relationships with one another within a general system of rules where each element acts with independence of other elements” (V. Ostrom, 1999, p.57; italics added by author). This is a relevant approach for this study, since it describes the interplay between the TMNs and the EU, and their reciprocal relation and influence.

In a European polycentric system, both the EU and its Member States set the legal and regulatory context and framework because they have legislative power. However, the power structure is not limited to top-down only. Interpretation and implementation happen on the local level, in urban day-to-day business. As such, “each unit within a polycentric system exercises considerable independence to make norms and rules within a specific domain” (E. Ostrom, 2010, p.552). These norms lead to needs of local authorities to carry out their work, which in turn are pooled and concentrated by the TMNs. Then, the networks lobby for their members’ interests at EU institutions, exerting influence up the scale.

3.2. Network Governance

To understand the functioning and workings of TMNs, the concept of network governance serves as a useful tool as it aims to “create a synergy between different competences and sources of knowledge in order to deal with complex and interlinked problems” (Dedeurwaerdere, 2007, p.209). As opposed to merely setting up new bodies of governance, network governance involves the “streamlining and improvement of the performance of existing governance efforts” (Haas, 2004, p.8).

3.2.1. General characteristics of TMNs

Put in a nutshell in the 30-year update of Limits to Growth, “A network is nonhierarchical. It is a web of connections among equals, held together not by force, obligation, material incentive, or social contract, but by shared values and the understanding that some tasks can be accomplished together
that could never be accomplished separately” (Meadows, Randers and Meadows, 2004, p.275).

Networks as such can be perceived as coordinating mechanisms, set in place to strive for more than their own, but a common goal; in order to have a raison d’être, they have to be “more than the sum of the actors and their links” (Provan and Kennis, 2008, p.233), thus being driven by a holistic stimulus.

As laid down by Kern, there are three criteria that constitute transnational municipal networks (2001, p.96). First, its member cities must be autonomous, acting independently. Their membership in the given TMN is optional and not imposed on them – “they operate in non-hierarchical political spaces that are characterized by voluntary interaction” (Gordon, 2013, p.290). Second, its organisation is (formally) non-hierarchical, horizontal and polycentric (see above). And third, cooperation between its member cities is decentralised, meaning that an exchange among them does not necessarily need to involve the network’s headquarter.

3.2.2. Defining network governance
Marcussen and Torfing define network governance as “Horizontal negotiations amongst a group of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors. These negotiations transpire within an institutionalised framework containing regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary elements. The governance network is somewhat self-regulating, and a crucial characteristic is that governance networks contribute to the production of public purpose within a particular area” (2003, p.1).

This rather detailed explanation holds some crucial characteristics necessary for comprehending networks, and hence shall be looked at closer hereafter. It can be broken down into five distinctive aspects:

1) With a view to actors, they have to indicate both their stake in the topic of interest, as well as their ability to add resources (information, experience) to the network and other members. They are connected horizontally instead of vertically (cf. Type II of multi-level governance).

2) With a view to negotiations, they are characterised both by bargaining and deliberation.

3) With a view to self-regulation, it should be understood as “a certain degree of collective constraint, other than that emanating directly from government” (Dedeurwaerder, 2007, p.212), which is attributed to the networks’ non-hierarchical governance (Provan and Kennis, 2008).

4) With a view to public purpose, it is “an expression of visions, understandings, values and policies that are valid for and directed towards the public” (Marcussen and Torfing, 2003, p.9).

5) With a view to the institutionalised framework, it supplies rules and guidance (“regulative); it promotes values (“normative”); it produces knowledge and ideas (“cognitive”); it generates identities and shared visions (“imaginary”) that can help its members “define who they are and what they are not” (ibid., p.14).

The latter characteristic leads to four different types of networks, depending on the mode of governance the network is mainly making use of: regulating governance networks, norm-formulating governance networks, knowledge-generating governance networks, or identity-constructing governance networks (ibid., p.18-19).
In a different approach to classifying TMNs, according to Betsill and Bulkeley, there are three concepts applicable to networks (2006). Epistemic communities are made up of mostly experts “who share common understanding of the scientific and political nature of a particular problem” (ibid., p.147). In contrast, members of transnational advocacy networks are drawn together by common values and ideas, trying to “use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies” (ibid.). Global civil society describes the multi-faceted landscape of organisations and actors, which all strive for an integral dealing with environmental topics. Hardly surprising, the authors conclude “transnational municipal networks do not fall neatly into such frameworks” (ibid., p.148). Arguably, the TMNs of interest for this paper can be subsumed under epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks, since they are bound both by technical conviction that climate change is happening and local governments have a stake in it, as well as by shared beliefs aspiring to influence national and European legislation in their favour.

Evidently, these two types (epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks) still see the state at the centre of analysis. In order to locate TMNs in a ‘governance landscape’ rather than only focusing on ‘government’, Román highlights that they both follow a vertical as well as horizontal approach. On the one hand, they serve as a link between local governments and their higher-scale counterparts (regional and national level). On the other hand, they provide a platform for cities and municipalities to get in touch with each other as well as to form alliances with non-state actors. To grasp their individual role, Román thus coined the term “governance from the middle” (2010, p.73).

3.2.3. Features of network effectiveness

Provan and Kennis provide a valuable framework to analyse the TMNs at hand (2003). At first, they distinguish between three types of networks, of which the last pertains to TMNs. Besides participants-governed networks, where its members manage themselves, and lead-organisation-governed networks, where there is one specific partaking member who is taking over administrative and facilitating tasks, the authors identify networks with a network administrative organisation (NAO). This type is similar to lead-organisation-governed networks, while it varies in that it is administered by an external organisation, “either through mandate or by the members themselves, for the exclusive purpose of network governance” (ibid., p.236).

On the basis of four characteristics, they focus on network effectiveness – defined as “the attainment of positive network-level outcomes that could not normally be achieved by individual organizational participants acting independently” (2003, p.230). In the following, these features will be illustrated briefly.

- **Trust**: When looking at the interactions between network members, it is the dispersion and reciprocity of trust that is key. Due to their non-hierarchical and voluntary nature, network compliance is not driven under penalty of sanctions or exclusion, “but because they trust that the other actors will also play their part and feel an obligation to contribute to the realisation of common goals and objectives” (Marcussen and Torfing, 2003, p.6). Provan and Kennis distinguish between high and low density of trust relations (2008, p.238), but also point out with regard to the success of the whole network, whether “everyone in the network need to trust one another or is it sufficient to have trust focused on a single or small set of organizations (centralization of trust relations)” (ibid., p.238).

- **Number of network participants**: In terms of participants, the authors indicate that with a growing quantity of members as well as increasing spatial dispersion, network governance becomes more complex. Hence, TMNs are distinguished by “‘policy proximity’ that is, coalitions of geographically dispersed actors drawn together by a
will to act jointly in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change” (Gustavsson, Elander and Lundmark, 2009, p.63).

- **Network goal consensus:** Crucial for the achievement of the network’s mission is the extent to which its members agree on what the network should be going for, and what it requires them to do. In other words, it denotes how similar the vision of the network is shared among its municipalities. “When there is general consensus on broad network-level goals, [...] network participants are more likely to be involved and committed to the network and more likely to work together” (Provan and Kennis, 2008, p.239).

- **Need for network-level competencies:** As fundamental idea, actors – in this case cities – join forces to meet an objective they cannot reach by themselves. Thus, this trait points to the abilities necessary to run the network in order to achieve its goals. For the TMNs, this is dealt with by the networks staff.

### 3.2.4. The structure of TMNs

This is closely linked to the organisation and structure of TMNs (Figure 2). Mostly, they consist of an international headquarter with national or regional coordinators; a secretariat in charge of administrative tasks; a President, Board, and a General Assembly; and member cities (Keiner and Kim, 2003; Kern and Bulkeley, 2009).

![Figure 2 Governing capacities of transnational municipal networks (in: Kern and Bulkeley, 2009, p.320)](image)

Besides *internal governing*, which relates to the ‘need for network-level competencies’ outlined above describing the tasks of mostly the secretariat, a network is charged with *external governing*. This entails “seeking to *influence* governmental actors, forms of *interdependence* with non-governmental actors and other TMNs and strategies for *intermediation* between actors at the network level and at the municipal level” (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009, p.323).

### 3.2.5. Functions provided by TMNs

Literature concerning transnational municipal networks often revolves around the functions they provide to their members. In particular, there are five main activities that are echoed throughout: *lobbying, communication, information management (incl. learning), contact platform, and supporting projects.*
Lobbying
Lobbying is key for these networks, as they “represent the interests of their members, at the European level in particular” (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009, p.314; Gordon, 2013; OECD, 2010), which is also true for the national and international level (cf. Chapter 2.4. Promoting the local level in international climate politics). It involves concentrating their members’ interest, packaging it into positions and then bringing them forward to relevant policy-making institutions (Jensen, 2004).

As it was described above, lobbying for these TMNs is only relevant in terms of influencing up the scale. Mutual influence, that is purposely attempting to affect each other, is of no concern for the networks’ cities. They join the TMNs for the same purposes – to make use of the very functions described in this section. None of them is characterised by competition between municipalities, hence there is not an incentive for members to influence each other. Furthermore, their membership is voluntary, so that each municipality can leave at any time.

Communication
Communication refers to the news and information disseminated by the networks, which includes, among others, the notification of project calls associated with funding opportunities or cities looking for potential project partners, current European legislation relevant to the local level, and the announcement of news about the networks themselves (Kern, 2001; Andonova, Betsill and Bulkeley, 2009).

Information management
Information management implies that TMNs “pool capacities and resources [of their members] towards shared goals, for example, to solve complex societal problems where substantial innovation is required” (Fünfgeld, 2015, p.67). This bundling of experiences and know-how can be done two-fold – directly or indirectly. Either networks provide forums for their members to meet, discuss and exchange among them, where the network acts as facilitator to enable this transfer of information (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009). Or they collect these experiences from their members, process them into knowledge and make them available, e.g. as ‘best-practices’ on their websites (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009). Information management is related to fostering learning or capacity building (Andonova, Betsill and Bulkeley, 2009). According to Kim and Keiner, this is “the most common reason why local governments take part in C2C [City-to-City Cooperation] is to learn from peers or cities facing similar challenges and experiencing similar conditions” (2006, p.1373).

Contact platform
Being a contact platform is, technically speaking, a feature rather than a function. But given that it mostly results from the information management conducted by the networks, it seems suitable at this place. One could also argue that it is an ‘implicit function’ of providing a space for cities to meet with other constituents. For example, events such as annual conferences, workshops, or project-related meetings serve, beside their original purpose, as loci for members to get to know and meet colleagues. Once these often personal relations are established, the network itself is not always involved when two or more of its members cooperate, in that this is done bilaterally. “The intangible outcomes of networks—greater trust between participants and the creation of a forum for raising and discussing other new issues—are often as important as the tangible ones” (Keiner and Kim, 2006, p.1383).
Supporting projects
TMNs also play a crucial role in supporting projects with varying shapes (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009). Besides informing about upcoming project calls (see Communication), networks help different cities get together for common projects. They can also provide administrative assistance with finalising the often complex project proposals, or, if part of the project consortium, take on controlling and management tasks.
4. Method and Research Area

The scholarly focus of this study is on the cooperation of cities with and within European transnational municipal networks (TMNs) dealing with issues of climate protection, by means of a sample of German cities. To allow for drawing conclusions about the functions provided by TMNs and the quality thereof, perspectives of both the service providers (staffs of the TMNs) and the beneficiaries (cities) are taken into consideration. This paper does not assess the feasibility or ambition level of potential of the municipalities’ climate protection activities.

In light of this aim, rather than examining the cities at hand, this paper seeks to contribute to the literature in terms of examining these municipalities’ interaction with European urban networks.

4.1. Methodology

A qualitative approach was chosen to gather data and gain insights since this study aims at examining the respondents’ assessments of the cooperation between TMNs and cities.

In general, semi-structured interviews are considered expedient for this type of research. On the one hand, certain questions and topics needed to be answered by the interviewees because these replies were essential to this study’s purpose. On the other, the interviews were structured to also allow enough space so that respondents could talk freely about their experiences. “A semi-structured interview is open ended, but follows a general script and covers a list of topics” (Bernard, 2006, p.210). Usually, an ‘interview guide’ is employed to ascertain that these topics are covered during the conversation and to account for procedural reliability. This approach is particularly useful when “dealing with high-level bureaucrats and elite members of a community – people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time” (ibid., p.212).

More precisely, expert interviews, as a specific form of semi-structured interviews, were the method chosen for this purpose: “Here the interviewees are of less interest as a (whole) person than their capacities as experts for a certain field of activity” (Flick, 2009, p.165). Furthermore, “expert knowledge does not only consist of systematized and reflexively accessible specialist knowledge, but it has the character of practical knowledge in big parts” (Bogner and Menz, 2002, p.46, cited in Flick, 2009, p.165; emphasis added by author). It is, in particular, this practical knowledge gained by network staff and employees in municipal departments through the interaction with their respective counterparts that the interviews were interested in. It would give valuable insight into the views on the networks by the networks themselves, but also by the cities, which are to be found in members of staff of the actual organisations.

This study is interested in the “context knowledge”, which aims at illustrating the ‘big picture’ and attempting to explain the issue from various angles – distinct to “process knowledge”, which rather focuses on the development of the topic at hand (Flick, 2009, p.166).

4.2. Method

The experts that would be eligible for this study were searched for in the networks and cities identified above. Within the networks, those contact persons were approached that are serving for the TMN’s interface to its member cities. Regarding the cities, first the respective

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4 Procedural reliability refers to a transparent and inter-subjective documentation of the information given.
department dealing with the city’s membership in these European networks was looked up, and second the staff member in charge of running the contacts was identified.

Based on the research questions and desktop research, an interview guide with specific items was compiled. Furthermore, a pilot interview was conducted to test the interview questions. Subsequently, a few minor adjustments were made to the interview guide (cf. Appendices 10.1 / 10.2 Interview guides).

This study made use of telephone interviews due to financial and time constraints within the frame of a Master’s thesis: “the primary reason that one might conduct a qualitative telephone interview is to reach a sample population that is in geographically diverse locations” (Berg, 2011, p.82). Following Berg, there are three essential steps to assure the interviews’ quality and validity:

“First, the investigator must establish legitimacy; next, the researcher must convince the potential subject that it is important for them to take part in the research; and finally, the researcher must carefully assure that the information he obtains is sufficiently detailed to contribute meaningfully to the study.” (ibid., p.83)

Following these instructions, an email was sent out the representatives of the networks and cities stating relevant and necessary information: disclosure about the interviewer; this study’s background and goal (the final project of a Master’s programme); and the scope of it (legitimacy).

Then, the importance of the respective network or city was highlighted, depicting the role and reasons it has for the project, followed by stating that an interview with said representative would be a valuable contribution to the overall significance of the results. A few questions, similar to those asked during the interview were presented beforehand to the participants, in order to familiarise them with nature of the interview. For further incentivising, the email concluded that if she/he would agree to participate, after finalisation of this thesis she/he could receive a copy, which might hold available interesting information from other cities and networks and their experiences (conviction). In closing, they were asked for a date to conduct the interview, if interested. In those cases where representatives did not reply to the email, they were called after a week or ten days to broach the subject again. If they were unattainable, it was attempted to reach them once more, either via telephone or email.

The last step builds on “craft[ing] some sort of fledgling relationship” (ibid.). As an ‘ice breaker’, the interviewer thanked the respondent for taking part, briefly introduced himself, quickly illustrating his background and outlining the course of the interview (rapport).

Before starting the actual questioning, the interviewees were notified that the content of the interview would only be used for the purpose of this dissertation. They then were asked whether they would agree on having the conversation recorded to ensure thoroughness of the notes taken by the interviewer.

After finishing all the scheduled interviews, the notes taken during the conversations were completed with re-listening to the recordings, where permission to do so was given by the respondent. The interviewees’ names then were anonymised, instead the contact persons were encoded (from CP1 to CP13). This was done upon request of some of the respondents. Subsequently, information was analysed: “Analysis is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place” (Bernard, 2006, p.452).
In case of this project, it was a “qualitative analysis of qualitative data” (ibid., p.451), backed up by desktop research to verify the substance of the statements brought forward. This was done by drawing on reports, news articles, or websites, where available.

4.3. Research Area
Across the globe, Germany is perceived as a pioneer in advancing energy transformation to such an extent that ‘Energiewende’ found its way into international parlance (The Guardian, 2012). Against this backdrop, it is particularly interesting to take a look at how the energy and climate objectives formulated at the national level translate to the local scale – and more specifically calling on European urban networks in search of support.

4.3.1. Sample criteria
The sample – TMNs – was chosen based on certain requirements. First, they had to suffice criteria for being esteemed a transnational municipal network, as outlined above (cf. Chapter 3.2 Network governance). Second, this study focuses on TMNs that are active in Europe. Hence, their priority area had to be Europe. Third, their objectives or main mission had to be dedicated to topics highly related to climate protection, i.e. in pursuit of activities contributing to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. An intensive literature review (OECD, 2010; Keiner and Kim, 2006; Giest and Howlett, 2013; Bulkeley and Betsill, 2013; Niederhafner, 2013; Hakelberg, 2014; Fünfgeld, 2015; among others) and desktop research resulted in these TMNs to be examined: ICLEI, Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, and EUROCITIES.

The municipalities included in this study were selected by reference to three key criteria: First, all the cities needed to pursue specific local climate strategies. Second, in order to elaborate on the additionality of multiple memberships of TMNs, the cities were required to participate in at least two of the networks (ICLEI, EUROCITIES, Energy Cities, Climate Alliance). Third, the sample itself had to present a balance of various sizes regarding population and characteristics, ranging from ‘university towns’ to cities holding industry. This was done to attempt a reasonably representative selection of different city types to account for their different motivations of membership in the TMNs.

This yielded the following cities: Berlin, Bonn, Freiburg, Hamburg, Heidelberg, Munich, and Stuttgart (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Berlin</th>
<th>Bonn</th>
<th>Freiburg</th>
<th>Hamburg</th>
<th>Heidelberg</th>
<th>Munich</th>
<th>Stuttgart</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICLEI</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Cities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Alliance</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUROCITIES</td>
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<td>total</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Membership of German sample cities in European transnational municipal networks (TMNs)

4.3.2. Overview of conducted interviews
A total of 11 interviews were conducted with 13 interviewees. Unfortunately, no interviews could be conducted with representatives from ICLEI and Frankfurt (as outlined in Table 4). Despite various attempts to set up an interview date with each of them, an interview could not be scheduled within the given time constraints. Since ICLEI is an important example of the TMNs to be analysed in this project and leaving it out would have resulted in an incomplete mapping of the European scene of climate-related networks, I decided to keep it within the
sample. As an alternative to the preferred expert interview with an ICLEI staff member, data concerning ICLEI was extracted from information available both on their website and in the literature reviewed earlier, as well as mainly on statements made by respondents of the cities interviewed. Frankfurt was ought to be included because its participation could have contributed further valuable insight: In addition to being member in Energy Cities and Climate Alliance, Frankfurt was one of the founding cities of EUROCITIES. Additionally, it hosts the headquarter of Climate Alliance. As such, and interview with a contact person from Frankfurt might have contained interesting information due to this unique context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>1 interview, 1 interviewee</td>
<td>ICLEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonn</td>
<td>1 interview, 1 interviewee</td>
<td>Energy Cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freiburg</td>
<td>1 interview, 1 interviewee</td>
<td>Climate Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>1 interview, 2 interviewees</td>
<td>EUROCITIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>1 interview, 1 interviewee</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>2 interviews, 2 interviewees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuttgart</td>
<td>1 interview, 2 interviewees</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Frankfurt)</td>
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Table 4 Overview of interviews conducted

Out of the 11 interviews, 10 were done via the telephone. The conversation with the two representatives from Stuttgart was held in person because a stay of the interviewer and the willingness of the interviewees for a face-to-face interview coincided. All but one interview was recorded by permission of the respondents. Each interview lasted between 30 and 70 minutes, with an average of 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted between late-March and late-April 2015.

4.3.3. Units of analysis: the transnational municipal networks (TMNs)
The four TMNs and seven cities selected are briefly presented below to outline and contextualise their relevance for this study.

ICLEI
ICLEI, which started out as “International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives” in 1990, is an international association of local authorities (ICLEI, n.d.). Since 2003, the self-proclaimed “world’s leading network” operates under the slogan “Local Governments for Sustainability” to reflect its concerns beyond environmental issues and to subsume its widened activities and engagement under a broader term. Originally located in Toronto, Canada, they have been headquartered in Bonn, Germany, since 2009.

ICLEI was included as a European TMN due to its regional communities, among them ICLEI Europe. Its secretariat has been in Freiburg, Germany, since 1992. Alongside European local governments, ICLEI Europe encompasses 161 members, including a few members from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Palestine, Morocco, Israel, and Iran (ICLEI Europe, n.d.). From Germany, there are 17 cities, one district, and one association.

In the literature concerning TMNs, ICLEI has been examined considerably (Andonova, Betsill & Bulkeley, 2009; Bulkeley, 2004; Giest and Howlett, 2013; Gordon, 2013; Hakelberg, 2014; Hoffmann, 2011; Krause, 2012). However, these studies have mostly concentrated on ICLEI’s ‘Cities for Climate Protection’ (CCP) campaign, established in 1993 (ICLEI Europe, n.d.). This paper focuses on a wider range of ICLEI programmes, and does so for several reasons. First, ICLEI introduced a different program labelled ‘Low-carbon city’, which seems to pursue a similar, if not same approach as the CCP. Second, with climate protection being considered as a cross-cutting topic, activities within ICLEI programs such as
‘Resource-efficient city’ or ‘Smart urban infrastructure’ may have strong interconnections to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. Hence, taking solely into account the CCP would exclude important and relevant activities from this study.

Energy Cities
Energy Cities was launched in 1990, originally as ‘Energie-cités’. It is headquartered in Besançon, France, with an additional office in Brussels, Belgium. As they put it, “Energy Cities represents more than 1000 local authorities from 30 countries. […] Close to 200 local authorities among them are individually Members of Energy Cities” (Energy Cities, 2015d), which refers to their binary membership. For one thing, “Collective Members” are constituencies, e.g. in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria, which serve as national representative networks of Energy Cities. For another thing, there are “Individual Members” – municipalities directly linked to the network. Out of these “Individual Members”, which total nearly 170, the majority are French local actors (75), with some Portuguese (10), Italian (9), and German (8) municipalities also participating.

Guided by the vision “The low energy city with a high quality of life for all” (Energy Cities, 2014), their mission is “Strengthening local authorities’ capacity to accelerate the energy transition”, accompanied by “Representing cities’ interests and influence national & EU policies” and “Developing and promoting our members’ initiatives” (ibid.). Therefore, their main activities concentrate on capacity-building of its members in terms of energy-related issues such as renewables energies and energy efficiency, as well as lobbying mostly at the European level for a stronger role of local authorities (hence a representation in Brussels).

In addition, Energy Cities leads the Covenant of Mayors Office, together with CEMR5, Climate Alliance, EUROCITIES and Fedarene6.

Climate Alliance
Climate Alliance was founded in 1990. Situated in Frankfurt, Germany, it is an association with an additional office in Brussels and some national and regional branches to coordinate activities from there (Climate Alliance, n.d.). In total, Climate Alliance has 1,709 members and is made up of cities, municipalities and districts. Although considered as a European network, the bulk is German-speaking (1,454 split into 974 members from Austria, 480 members from Germany; Climate Alliance, 2015).

The association is the only network of these TMNs exclusively dedicated to climate change. Their objectives include, besides “reducing greenhouse gas emissions of members”, “supporting indigenous rainforest peoples” and “conserving the tropical rain forests and their biological diversity” (Climate Alliance, n.d.). This illustrates the network’s rather holistic comprehension of climate protection. In addition, in order to become a member in Climate Alliance, municipalities commit themselves to:

“cut CO2 emissions by 10 % every 5 years. The important milestone of halving per capita emissions (baseline year 1990) shall be achieved at the latest in 2030. In the long-term, Climate Alliance members aim at a sustainable level of 2.5

5 CEMR, the ‘Council of European Municipalities and Regions’, is a European association of national associations, which in turn consist of local and regional governments. These 57 member associations represent around 150,000 municipalities (CEMR, 2014).

6 Fedarene (European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and Environment) is a European association of regional authorities and organisations, advocating energy and environment policies at the European level (Fedarene).
tons CO2 equivalent emissions per capita and year by energy saving, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources” (ibid.).

EUROCITIES
EUROCITIES was founded in 1986, and considers itself “the network of major European cities” (EUROCITIES, n.d.). To qualify, a city must have a population of at least 250,000 inhabitants (EUROCITIES n.d.). Although a European network by nature, EUROCITIES also has 40 ‘associate members’ from outside the EU or European Economic Area. Overall, EUROCITIES currently has over 130 ‘full members’, with 15 German full member cities.

Their operations are threefold: ‘networking’, ‘influencing’, and ‘visibility’ (EUROCITIES, 2013). Whereas the networking function provides its members a platform for exchange, influencing is pursued through advocating the needs and demands of local governments on a European level. To enhance the visibility of its members, EUROCITIES serves as a stage for cities to present themselves and call attention to their work. Given its headquarter’s location in Brussels with ties to European institutions, EUROCITIES sees itself as an influential lobbyist for the concerns of larger European cities.

In contrast to the TMNs above, EUROCITIES is a broad network with several priorities other than sustainability, climate, or energy. EUROCITIES’ key priority areas are ‘citizens’, ‘climate’, and ‘jobs’, addressed in six forums and some 40 working groups. In terms of relevance, the network’s forum ‘environment’ and the working group ‘air quality, climate change & energy efficiency’ were examined (EUROCITIES, n.d.).

C40
Although not within the scope of this study, C40 shall be mentioned briefly. The ‘Climate Leadership Group’ represents megacities on a global level (C40, n.d.). They have received public attention as a result of their iconic member cities, the leadership of prominent proponents such as their president and former mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, as well as their international activities – for example the announcement of the ‘Compact of Mayors’ during the Climate Summit in New York, 2014 (C40, n.d.).

Membership within C40 differs between ‘Megacities’ and ‘Innovator Cities’. Whereas the former is made up of mostly cities such as Stockholm, Los Angeles, London, Johannesburg, or Sydney, the latter, which do not qualify as megacities “must be internationally recognized for barrier-breaking climate work, a leader in the field of environmental sustainability, and a regionally recognized ‘anchor city’ for the relevant metropolitan area” (C40, 2011, p.1). This is relevant for this study as from Germany, Berlin and Heidelberg are members in C40 (as ‘megacity’ and ‘innovator city’ respectively), which might influence these cities’ engagement in other TMNs and shall thus be included within the scope for that reason.

4.3.4. Units of analysis: the cities
Berlin
Berlin is home to 3.4 million inhabitants and is Germany’s largest city (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.). Germany’s capital since 1990 after being reunited, membership in urban networks and European TMNs with relevance to climate issues has be to considered with a view to its political standing, and as such, prestigious motives of participation.

A city with a population larger than 10 million people (Cambridge Dictionary Online, n.d.).
Berlin strives to reduce its CO₂ emissions by up to 40 per cent by 2020, and to be climate-neutral by 2050 (with 1990 the baseline year; Berliner Informationsstelle Klimaschutz, n.d.). Activities and initiatives mostly focus on expansion of renewables energies, enhancement of energy efficiency, and emissions cuts in transportation.

Berlin is member of ICLEI, Climate Alliance, EUROCITIES, and C40.

An interview was conducted with a representative from the Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt – Sonderreferat Klimaschutz und Energie (‘Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment – Special committee for climate protection and energy’).

Bonn
Bonn, inhabiting 311,287 people (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.), served as capital of Germany until 1990. With a substantial part of the governmental apparatus moving to Berlin, Bonn sought to establish itself as an international city, epitomised by its slogan “Freude. Joy. Joie. Bonn” (stringing together ‘joy’ in German, English, and French). Besides hosting many think tanks and NGOs mostly related to development work (e.g. Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, Germanwatch, CARE), Bonn is home to several secretariats of UN bodies such as UNFCCC, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and UNESCO-UNEVOC - International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Bonn, 2015a).

With a view to 2020, Bonn aims to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 40 per cent, compared to 1990.

Apart from being home of ICLEI’s ‘World Secretariat’, Bonn’s mayor, Jürgen Nimptsch, won election to the network’s executive committee in early 2015 (Bonn, 2015b), showcasing the close ties between ICLEI and the city of Bonn.

In addition, Bonn’s membership in other European TMNs includes Climate Alliance and EUROCITIES.

An interview was conducted with a representative from the Amt für Internationales und globale Nachhaltigkeit (‘Department of International Affairs and Global Sustainability’).

Freiburg
Freiburg has a total population of 220,286 citizens (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.). The city has been deemed as Germany’s 'eco-capital’ (Der Spiegel, 1992), ‘German federal capital of climate protection’ (Deutsche Umwelthilfe, 2010), and finalist of the ‘European Green Capital Award 2010’ (European Green Capital, 2010). Freiburg’s longstanding reputation of being environmentally friendly and oriented towards renewables energy sources can be traced back to the 1970s. Supporting its status as a ‘green city’, Freiburg maintains several initiatives, such as the model district ‘Vauban’ for sustainable housing, or the launch of a cluster for promoting solar and environmental economies (Freiburg, 2014).

Freiburg’s aim is to cut emissions by half in 2030, and be climate-neutral in 2050, on the basis of emissions in 1992.
ICLEI’s European Secretariat has been in Freiburg since 1992. Furthermore, Dieter Salomon, mayor of the city and member of the Green Party, served on the network’s executive committee from 2006 to 2012. Since 2012 he is part of ICLEI’s regional executive committee representing the European branch.

Additionally, Freiburg is a member of Energy Cities and Climate Alliance.

An interview was conducted with a representative from the Referat Internationale Kontakte (‘International Affairs Division’).

**Hamburg**

Hamburg, with 1.7 million inhabitants, is Germany’s second largest city (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.). Its port is the second biggest in Europe, contributing considerably to the city’s economy. Hamburg was recognized with the ‘European Green Capital Award 2011’, on the grounds of the city’s “well defined targets, excellent results, future plans and structured monitoring with respect to climate change” (European Green Capital, 2011). In practice, its “excellent” public transport system was highlighted, as well as their ambitious emission reduction goals in light of the port having to manage an increasing number of containers without an expansion of the port itself due to its geographical limitations. Hamburg strives for mitigation targets of 40 per cent by 2020, and 80 per cent by 2050, compared to 1990.

Hamburg is a member of ICLEI, Climate Alliance, EUROCITIES, and C40.

An interview was conducted with two representatives from the Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt (‘Authority for Urban Development and the Environment’).

**Heidelberg**

Heidelberg, the smallest of the cities examined, is inhabited by 152 113 persons (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.). The city is home to Germany’s oldest university as well as other colleges, making academia highly important to Heidelberg: The university and its clinic is the city’s principal employer, and students constitute a large proportion of the population. Heidelberg’s environmentalism is evident in its ‘Bahnstadt’, a model district with passive houses that strives for zero emissions in the long run. This is to be achieved by renewable energy supply and energy-efficient housing (Heidelberg, n.d.).

Heidelberg’s goal is to achieve a 95 per cent reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2050, compared to 1995.

Heidelberg’s membership in TMNs is particularly interesting, since it is a relatively small city (in comparison to the other cities in this study) that is taking part in four networks: ICLEI, Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, and C40. Moreover, Heidelberg’s mayor, Eckart Würzner, has been president of Energy Cities since 2005 and was just confirmed recently (Heidelberg, 2015).

An interview was conducted with a representative from the Amt für Klimaschutz und Energie (‘Department for climate protection and energy’).

**Munich**

Munich has a total population of 1.4 million inhabitants, being Germany’s third largest city (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.). It is economically characterised by electrical
engineering, several IT companies, and an automotive sector, including Siemens and BMW. Faced with the challenge of providing renewable energies to its population and economic sectors alike, Munich aims for providing ‘green electricity’ to all by 2025, and a total coverage with renewables by 2040 (München, n.d.).

In terms of mitigation, Munich aims at halving its CO₂ emissions by 2030.

The city is a member of Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, and Climate Alliance, whereas the head of the ‘Department of Environment and Health’, Joachim Lorenz, has been in the executive committee since 1999 (Climate Alliance, n.d.)

Two interviews were conducted with representatives of the Referat für Arbeit und Wirtschaft (‘Department of Labour and Economic Development) and the Referat für Umwelt und Gesundheit (‘Department of Environment and Health’).

Stuttgart
Stuttgart’s population amounts to 604,297 inhabitants (as of 31/12/2013; Deutscher Städtetag, n.d.). Besides being home to around 1,500 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Stuttgart may be most famous for its large industry. Aside from headquartering automobile groups Daimler and Porsche, Siemens and Bosch, among others, are manufacturing here. Stuttgart has in the past been governed by mayors of Germany’s conservative party (CDU), but since 2012 the city is headed by Fritz Kuhn (Green Party; Stuttgart, n.d.).

In line with Climate Alliance’s objective, Stuttgart is aiming at a CO₂ emissions reduction goal of 50 per cent by 2030, mostly through initiatives in energy sectors and transportation.

Although ‘only’ member of two networks (with the other cities participating in at least three), Energy Cities and Climate Alliance, Stuttgart contributed to this study as the most industrialised city and thus facing severe challenges with regard to combining further strengthening of its economies while promoting renewable energies and energy efficiency.

An interview was conducted with representatives from the Amt für Umweltschutz (‘Environmental Protection Office’) and the Abteilung Energiewirtschaft (‘Department for Energy Management’).
Figure 3 Map of the networks examined / the cities interviewed (source: Google Maps); yellow stars indicating the TMNs, red pointers indicating cities.
5. Results
Hereinafter, the results of this study will be presented. Outcomes will be illustrated drawing on the theoretical framework illustrated in Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework.

5.1. Findings regarding the TMNs’ governance and features
Referring to the first research question, the following section answers the following:

1. How are the transnational municipal networks of interest (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES) governed in practice? How can they be further classified? How effective are they?

5.1.1. Governance of the TMNs
As outlined above, there are three key criteria distinguishing transnational municipal networks (TMNs), which pertain to all the networks at hand:

1) Members are autonomous, membership is optional.
   It is in the networks’ nature to be associations based on voluntary commitment of its members.

2) Organisation is formally non-hierarchical, horizontal and polycentric.
   These networks were established by cities in the first place due to common ground and serve as a place for exchange. Hence, authorities are considered equal with no formal hierarchy between the cities. They are polycentric in that the network’s headquarter is indeed the structure’s main node, but there are several members within each network that are rather active, occupying emerging and prominent positions. They serve as additional hubs of the network that mutually impact each other.

3) Cooperation between its member cities is decentralised.
   The formal path for cooperation is through the network’s secretariat. It either provides resources (information, knowledge) to its members itself, or acts as ‘matchmaker’ to connect two or more municipalities with each other. But as a consequence of ongoing network activities, i.e. gathering at meetings, project collaboration, etc., representatives of cities get to know their counterparts in other local governments. So when seeking cooperation, rather than only using the formal mode of calling on the network’s secretariat, many informal, bilateral routes are often used, resulting in practice in a decentralised network structure.

5.1.2. Classification of the TMNs
With a view to the governance aspect of networks, the following definition was useful when examining the TMNs:

“Horizontal negotiations amongst a group of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors. These negotiations transpire within an institutionalised framework containing regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary elements. The governance network is somewhat self-regulating, and a crucial characteristic is that governance networks contribute to the production of public purpose within a particular area” (Marcussen and Torfing, 2003, p.1)

As aforementioned, cities must indicate both their stake in the topic of interest, as well as their ability to add resources (information, experience) to the network. Though, this does not hold true for all the networks’ members. Relating to the voluntary grounds of the networks, cities neither have to demonstrate constant involvement in the network, nor their adding of resources, since there is no authority to enforce this. Hence, this only applies to the active members within the networks. All the cities interviewed are participating actively in the TMNs, although they differ in both their extent and the specific network they are involved in (which will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 5.5. Network focus and involvement).
In terms of the institutionalised framework, the distinction between different governance networks provides further insight into the characteristics of the network. Only Climate Alliance falls under regulating governance networks, since it is the only network that requires its members to commit to concrete CO\(_2\) reduction goals. Moreover, all the examined TMNs are norm-formulating governance networks. Norms within these networks emerge and are reinforced by the networks’ objectives and best practices of their members. First, by joining a network, a member acknowledges these goals, which aim at the responsibility of cities to cut their emissions. Second, best practices are methods or techniques deemed as effective and appropriate activities. Thus, through their promotion, use, and proliferation, these networks expedite norms and certain behaviours. In addition, all the TMNs can be labelled knowledge-generating governance networks. Besides the aforesaid showcasing of best practices, knowledge is created through meetings and workshops organised by the networks, where staff from the member cities gathers and exchanges expertise. Lastly, the TMNs also fall under the category of identity-constructing governance networks. As it will be looked at closer down below, these networks are advocacy groups, representing their members’ interest at various, but mostly the European level. Self-evidently, in order to lobby for a cause, it needs an identity to start with, which the respective network has to agree on. This identity is constituted and constantly shaped by its members, but also shapes its members, being a reciprocal process.

5.1.3. Network effectiveness of the TMNs

Network effectiveness was defined as “the attainment of positive network-level outcomes that could not normally be achieved by individual organizational participants acting independently” (Provan and Kennis, 2003, p.230). Regarding the four features contributing to network effectiveness, the following observations can be stated.

**Trust**, for ensuring functioning of the networks, is extremely important and absolutely essential. Again, given the voluntary nature of their collaboration, “[the members] trust that the other actors will also play their part and feel an obligation to contribute to the realisation of common goals and objectives” (Marcussen and Torfing, 2003, p.6). Posed above, it was asked whether “everyone in the network need to trust one another or is it sufficient to have trust focused on a single or small set of organizations (centralization of trust relations)” (Provan and Kennis, 2003, p.238). For all the networks analysed in study, trust of the members focuses on set of other cities and the respective secretariat. Trusting ‘everyone’ in these networks is not possible for the reason alone that all of them have more than a hundred members each. So, as a partaking municipality, you would not know all of your peers. Instead, there are trust relations among those members whose contact persons know each other. Additionally, their trust lies in the network’s secretariat. For one, it is the TMN’s central authority. But for another, it is also perceived as an institution that stands surety for its members. This guarantee is also vital for creating trust among network members in the first place.

Concerning the number of network participants, ICLEI (here specifically referring to its European division), Energy Cities and EUROCITIES have similar numbers of (full) members, ranging between 130 and 170. Only Climate Alliance has more than 1,400 municipalities. In any case, network governance is shaped by policy goals and orientations rather than geographical proximity. Vicinity within the structure highly depends on the degree of the members’ active involvement in the networks.
As noted above, *network goal consensus* is essential for the achievement of each of the networks’ mission. As such, the extent to which its members agree on the network’s aims strongly influences its success. In general, the TMNs were assessed as having a high level of goal consensus, since consent with the network’s objectives is a primary requirement for joining in the first place. “In today’s world, there is not a single municipality, which is not aware that it has to act and cut its emissions. It is not a question of ‘if’, but ‘what’.” (CP13)

With regard to *network-level competencies*, referring to the abilities of the secretariats to run the networks, there was general contentment with the networks’ staff, highlighting their approachability and quick response time.

In general and based on an individual assessment of these four features, ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES seem to be very effective in conducting their network activities.

5.2. Findings regarding the TMNs’ functions

This sub-chapter attempts to answer the second research question:

2. The transnational municipal networks of interest (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES) provide a range of services to their members. Which of these services are used the most by the sample cities?

The following section addresses the functions described above, including: lobbying, information management (incl. learning), contact platform and supporting projects, awareness raising and communication.

5.2.1. Lobbying

Lobbying was one of, if not the most important function highlighted in the interviews. This importance is illustrated by the fact that each of the four TMNs analysed maintains an office in Brussels, although only EUROCITIES is headquartered there.

Municipalities are already actively involved in climate protection. Their effectiveness lies in their flexibility to adjust mitigating measures of greenhouse gas emissions accordingly to the specific contexts at local level. It is the most suitable scale to deal with the practicalities of issues such as energy consumption, waste management, or building codes. “A mayor is the closest representative of authority to the citizens; she/he is the closest to local stakeholders – and can bring them onboard” (CP12). Furthermore, respondents pointed at the EU’s emissions reduction goals in 2020 and 2030, whose achievement would heavily depend on effective mitigation activities in urban sectors. At the same time, “the largest barrier to changing towards an energy transition is the EU and especially national level because they are the more reluctant ones to change” (CP12).

Objectives of the TMNs’ lobby work

Essentially, cities – mostly through their TMNs – seek support from the EU for local governments “so that we can play our part” (CP8). TMNs, as united voices of their member cities, lobby for more decentralization and devolution of responsibilities to municipalities. National governments would act hesitantly because it would mean a decrease of responsibilities and influence. That is why they turn to the EU calling on its principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore, the networks promote a better acknowledgement of “cities as unmediated and direct partners of the EU” (CP3), which would sidestep the national level (as outlined and described above; cf. Chapter 3.1 Multi-level governance).
In concrete terms, these TMNs advocate for an enabling environment provided by the EU – “European legislation must not be restrictive, but supportive for municipalities” (CP7). This enhanced freedom at local level, regulative power for cities, and additional resources would allow them to improve on their modes of governing: ‘self-governing’, ‘governing by provision’, ‘governing by authority’, ‘governing through enabling’ (cf. Chapter 2.2.1 Modes for cities to govern climate protection).

Several respondents noted that the EU had also acknowledged the networks’ potential, and hence would approach them: “the European Commission has to construct policies applicable for 28 different administrative apparatuses. This is more effective if they [European Commission] include Member States through cities early on in the process” (CP10).

Based on the data of the interviews, two forms of lobbying can be distinguished. The first is labelled ‘lobbying, including mayoral support’; the second is termed ‘lobbying on a technical level’.

**Lobbying, including mayoral support**

‘Lobbying, including mayoral support’ indicates that mayors of the respective cities actively take part in the network’s lobby work. For example they participate in conferences representing their municipality, or take on functions in the networks’ committees. This was the particular case for the mayors from Bonn, Freiburg, and Heidelberg. As stated before (see Chapter 4.3.4. Units of analysis: the cities), Jürgen Nimptsch (mayor of Bonn) is a member of ICLEI’s executive committee. Dieter Salomon (mayor of Freiburg) has been part of the network’s global management team, and today has a role in ICLEI’s regional executive committee for Europe. Eckhard Würzner (mayor of Heidelberg) has been president to Energy Cities since 2005.

**Lobbying on a technical level**

‘Lobbying on a technical level’ describes a more indirect kind of lobbying. It refers to the attempt to influencing policy-making by commenting on policies. Often, these networks react to EU legislation, which has implications for the TMNs’ sphere of action. Lobbying takes several shapes, depending on the status of a regulation’s or directive’s proposal. In the early stages, network staff tries to identify the respective leader and has informal talks with her/him, if they get in touch with her/him. On a political level, they enter into discussions with the political leaders driving the directive, e.g. to discuss the Energy Union and the role of cities in it. After that, once there is a draft of the directive, formal consultations take place. When the directive has been passed, these TMNs commonly issue position papers, thus representing the cities’ stance on the issue. The network approaches its members asking for input to the position paper: For one thing, it is them that the networks represent. For another, the municipalities have first-hand experience on the topic. Lastly, the directive directly impacts the local level. Most importantly for the municipalities, when asked by the networks to comment on a EU paper or draft, they perceive it as “the channel to become politically active” (CP3); “it is a way for us to exert influence, set the agenda, and state needs for support” (CP8).

**Lobby work on national level**

Given these networks’ European nature, lobbying on national level is, however, somewhat more difficult. The TMNs stated two indirect possibilities for them to have impacts on national legislation. First, in a top-down approach, influence can be attempted through EU policies. Second, in a bottom-up approach, the networks try to work through their members, e.g. by providing draft letters to their cities for them to translate in their respective language...
and send to their ministries. However, interviewees attributed only limited extent to the actual degree of networks to shape national politics.

Respondents’ assessment of the TMNs’ lobbying
Generally, most respondents considered lobbying as a task that the networks would carry out themselves very effectively and would not require the cities to tell them how to do so. Only one interviewee encouraged the TMNs to not only advocate what should be done, but also what has been done already on the local level. According to him, the EU would not be aware of what municipalities have achieved yet, which should have been communicated by the networks.

Correspondent to interviewees from cities and networks alike, Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, Climate Alliance, and ICLEI would work together well when lobbying at the European level. Instead of only advocating their own cause, these networks coordinate common positions with a view to EU climate-related legislation, and harmonise their lobbying activities.

5.2.2. Information management
Information is provided to members in various ways. Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, and Climate Alliance make available best practice of its members, which other cities can refer to when planning similar initiatives in their own municipalities. Whereas they are without charge and free for all to see, webinars or workshops are exclusive content for members only. Topics of webinars are often practically oriented, aiming at supplying their members with tools or familiarising them with project-related administration. As such, the networks inform about possible financial instruments for municipalities to fund urban initiatives. In addition, some webinars teach participants on how to respond best to project calls, i.e. how to develop a sound draft, how to find project partners, and how to manage the bureaucratic aspect of the process.

Lastly, study trips were mentioned as opportunities to learn on-site about model projects. However, cities’ contact persons rather reported about being visited by others such as in Freiburg or Heidelberg, than participating and visiting projects in other cities themselves.

5.2.3. Contact platform
The networks’ function as contact platforms was echoed throughout the interviews. Mostly, respondents stated the networks’ respective annual meetings as important occasions to see their counterparts from other cities. On the one hand, people meet again that have known each other before, and catch up and exchange on common issues. On the other hand, it was noted that making contact with new people was easy, either by approaching other themselves or being introduced by mutual acquaintances.

The real value of having met at a conference was seen in establishing bonds of trust. Most of the interviewees stated that they would be in touch with several of their colleagues in other cities. Thus rather than contacting the networks’ secretariats for information on certain issues, these bilateral relations are used to exchange on matters relevant to both: “some information you only get when you have met before” (CP4). Hence, the TMNs’ “door-opening function” (CP10) was praised as one of the greatest advantages these networks provide to their members.

5.2.4. Supporting projects
The networks’ support to members with regard to project work was also appreciated. This stretches from informing about project calls or existing proposals by other cities ready to be
joined by others, over organising brokerage events to bring together like-minded municipalities, to actually helping set up project consortiums. Whereas the cities are interested in the implementation, submitting and – if successful – running the projects involves bureaucracy and administrative work to a large extent. This is where the networks have specialised expertise and can use it to undertake these tasks, so that the municipalities can focus on the technical aspects of the project.

5.2.5. Awareness raising
Another feature that was raised about the TMNs was awareness raising. Some of the networks run programs to educate the public or municipal staffs about the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions with a view to climate change. Moreover, they support their members to create informational campaigns themselves.

5.2.6. Communication
The cities’ representatives generally perceived positively the networks’ communication, which is the news and information spread by the TMNs, e.g. about upcoming project calls, or EU legislations impacting the municipalities’ work. Usually, distributed in the form newsletters, respondents from the sample’s cities felt well informed by the TMNs about both internal developments of the networks and trends on EU level. Specifically, interviewees uttered contentment about the news on upcoming project tenders, and calls to join other cities to develop common projects.

Interviewees also noted that the EU would use the networks to spread information. Through relying on the TMNs as multiplicators, the EU could reach effectively the local level. Thereby, information are passed directly to municipalities without seeing its way through the Member States.

Only one interviewee noted the “information overload” (CP3) by the TMNs, but also mentioned that this was not an issue particularly inherent to the networks’ work. Instead, it was considered a general problem for head officials being confronted with a lot of emails each day.

In addition, most of the networks use their website and blogs to inform about upcoming events or news.

5.3. Network-specific findings
In this section, network-specific results concerning ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES will be recorded, with regard to the second research question:

3. What are the individual traits of each of these networks?

5.3.1. ICLEI
Among the cities interviewed, Berlin, Bonn, Freiburg, Hamburg, and Heidelberg are members of ICLEI. Although this study sought to focus on the European section of ICLEI, respondents only emphasised the network’s internationality. The TMN’s international orientation was pointed to as one of its advantages, as “it allows us to embed our city’s activities within an international context” (CP6). This would enable not only learning from, but also inspiring others. Another benefit resulting from ICLEI’s internationality is the collection and aggregation of emission data from municipalities worldwide. Reference to these statistics would help to convince critics within the own municipal administrations, since arguing for stricter climate protection activities and policies could be substantiated with concrete numbers. ICLEI’s global engagement, leading to its public perception and standing in climate
politics, was welcomed. In terms of the influence an individual city has in comparison to the network, “ICLEI will be paid attention to completely different than to us as [a single city]” (CP6). Furthermore, it was perceived as a stage where cities, by engaging in network activities, could showcase their own internationality. On the downside, ICLEI’s global approach would sometimes exacerbate comparability between cities – “climate protection means a completely different thing in New Delhi than here in Europe” (CP9). Alluding to the diverging issues that such a city faces in comparison to the cities in this sample, the respondent noted the challenges involved in learning from peers situated in different geographical and urban contexts. Another disadvantage of the network’s internationality (and large amount of members globally) was seen in its bureaucracy. Decision-making would take a long time because decisions need to be agreed on by several authorities, resulting in the network being “cumbersome” (CP4).

ICLEI was also praised for its ability “to throw huge events” (CP9). A recent example is the network’s ‘World Congress’ in Seoul, Republic of Korea, gathering some 2,500 participants from over 250 cities. However, a respondent uttered concerns regarding ICLEI’s emphasis on public relations and activities aiming at publicity. Among others, this would reflect in some of its positions being rather superficial in order to appeal to a broader audience.

Interestingly, the interviewees from Bonn, Freiburg, Hamburg, and Heidelberg all stated that their cities’ memberships in ICLEI were initiated by their respective former mayors, and that the level of their current engagement in the TMN would also hinge on their present mayors.

Due to reasons not particularly related to this network’s quality of work, only Bonn and Freiburg indicated close cooperation recently with ICLEI. As aforementioned, both these have a specific relation to this TMN because Bonn hosts its World Secretariat, whereas Freiburg is home to the European Secretariat. Both indicated that they would cooperate through ICLEI mostly on an international level, and to a much lesser extent with European counterparts.

5.3.2. Climate Alliance
All of the cities interviewed are members in Climate Alliance. As mentioned above, it is the only network solely and explicitly dedicated to climate protection, which stems from its founders’ sense of “global responsibility to cut emissions” (CP9). Furthermore, the network strives for a holistic approach. Rather than solely promoting emission reductions, Climate Alliance also focuses on preserving tropical rainforests and supporting indigenous rainforest peoples, whose territories are often pristine forests. In addition, the network also aims at raising awareness by demonstrating the broader contexts and interconnections with regard to climate change – “cutting emissions also means a change in consumption patterns” (CP9).

With regard to membership in Climate Alliance, the decision to be part of the network is not by mayoral order, but has to be passed through municipal council.

Although Climate Alliance does lobbying, the network was mentioned mostly in the context of technical cooperation and on project level. Several cities named awareness raising and information initiatives as well as educational projects as one of the strengths and unique selling point of Climate Alliance. This may best be illustrated by an example: Stadtradeln (in English: ‘city bicycling’) is a campaign organised by the network. Municipalities that take part are to promote riding bikes to work and for leisure – over the span of 21 days, all the kilometres travelled by participants within a municipality are recorded, added up, and made
public on a website. There, municipalities ‘compete’ against each other in terms of the most bicycled kilometres and the CO₂ emissions avoided, compared to if the distances were covered by bar. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness – both on the side of local authorities and citizens. Local politicians are explicitly asked to join in order to promote bicycle-friendly aspects in urban planning through their self-experience of riding the bike in their respective municipality. On the part of the citizens, the initiative aims at advancing the use of bikes over taking the car. Of the sample cities, Bonn and Munich have been regularly taken part in the campaign.

In addition, Climate Alliance is the only TMN to have its members voluntarily commit to GHG reduction goals as a condition of membership. Two of the cities at hand mentioned that they had been using the network’s tool (‘Ecoregio’) to measure their urban emissions, and also to exchange experience with other members on that matter.

Another difference to the other networks is the number and property of Climate Alliance’s members. The network represents more than 1,700 municipalities, of which the vast majority are mostly German speaking. This focus on municipalities in Austria and Germany was one of the main reasons for one of the sample cities to specifically cooperate with Climate Alliance. First, it allows for an exchange with and learning from peers who face similar challenges and are embedded in the same national context – that is, the same legal and regulatory frameworks. Second, the “convenience” of being able to communicate in German was emphasised (CP3). However, it was also noted that this very advantage for germanophone members could strike other European members as “excluding” or at least as a barrier to get more active in Climate Alliance (CP3).

Regarding the fact that the majority of Climate Alliance’s members are smaller communities (populations of some 30,000 inhabitants), it was remarked that exchange of experiences and learning would often only benefit them – “they are still underway” (CP5). This refers to the bulk of towns that just embarked on their low-carbon development, whereas the larger cities would already be ahead. Best practices test, developed, and provided by cities would help smaller communities and serving of multipliers of ideas and initiatives. In addition, some cities would find it hard in Climate Alliance to find peers – municipalities facing similar parameters. Hence, metropolises would rather look for partner cities to exchange on an international level.

5.3.3. Energy Cities
Freiburg, Heidelberg, Munich, and Stuttgart are the sample cities that participate in Energy Cities. Akin to Climate Alliance, it is a programmatically specific network, being a European association for energy issues. Due to its history, the major share of its members is made up of French municipalities (cf. Chapter 4.3.3. Units of analysis: the transnational municipal networks (TMNs)). Encapsulating the similarities to Climate Alliance, one respondent stated “Climate Alliance is a European network with a big focus on Germany, Energy Cities is a European network with a big focus on France” (CP12).

Some respondents described a reliance on Energy Cities for technical and project-related reasons. As such, the network provides support by jointly planning and developing project proposals with its members for calls from the EU. Usually, there is “huge competition” (CP12) within these tenders, which requires time and expertise to prepare for – resources that municipalities themselves often lack and Energy Cities can help out with. The network also

8 https://www.stadtradeln.de/
functions as a matchmaker to bring together potential project partners. As such, Energy Cities’ staff examines submitted project ideas, informs its members about emerging project consortiums that it deem to be viable, asking for other cities to join in. In a sense, it is a pre-selection, which is appreciated by its members: “If you get an offer from Energy Cities to participate in a project, you know it is an option to be taken seriously” (CP8). During the further procedure, the network may take on administrative tasks or aspects of the project management of running projects, “which helps a lot” (CP8).

In terms of lobbying, some respondents noted they were asked by Energy Cities to contribute input to the network’s position papers. They further indicated that this would allow them to have an impact, although indirectly, on European policy-making. With regard to efficiency, one interviewee stated that “with the limited means [Energy Cities] has, [they] still manage to get a good positioning of cities in European energy and climate policies” (CP12).

Events and especially their annual conference were described as “places of conviviality”: “when you attend an annual conference, you see that people are happy to meet again” (CP12). According to surveys handed and filled out after the events, participants would regularly refer to the opportunity to meet colleagues and friends.

In addition to awareness raising campaigns, such as ‘ENGAGE’⁹, the network provides technical workshops. By way of example, ‘IMAGINE’ is a brainstorming and capacity development framework to support local authorities and relevant stakeholders to address obstacles during their development towards a “low-energy city with a high quality of life for all” (Energy Cities, n.d.). The goal is to think of and, as the name implies, imagine possibilities for change.

5.3.4. EUROCITIES

Berlin, Bonn, Hamburg, and Munich are members of EUROCITIES. As illustrated in Chapter 4.3.3. Units of analysis: the transnational municipal networks (TMNs), this TMN covers a wide range of topics not limited to climate and environmental issues. In each participating city, there is one registered contact person who mediates between the network and the city. So in general, she/he receives all information, news, and requests from EUROCITIES, and distributes them, based on the specific subject, to the municipal department responsible. In the case relevant for this study, in each city there is a main focal point, and a contact person in charge of environmental topics.

On the side of EUROCITIES, this specialisation is reflected by its structure. The forum ‘Environment’ deals with all the matters relevant to this topic, and hosts seven working groups, which in turn concentrate on sub-themes, among them the working group for ‘Air Quality, Climate Change & Energy Efficiency’.

With regard to the cities who are actively taking part in both the forum and the working group, members would vary over time, depending on both technical and political aspects: “First, what do we get out of participating there? Second, what are priorities and agendas of our own city?” (CP7). In the forum, it is usually generalists that represent their city, e.g. the heads of departments with an overview of their activities and interests on that matter, also including issues concerning waste, water, noise, or greening the economy. To meetings of the working group, municipalities send their experts who are familiar with their cities’ climate and energy strategy. Hence, discussions are very thematic and topic-specific: “those who

⁹ http://www.energy-cities.eu/ENGAGE
engage here want to get something out for their city. They want the EU to help them, not stand in their way” (CP7). In addition to the technical exchange during meetings of the forum and the working group, one interviewee highlighted the friendly atmosphere and relation to other members in the network: “EUROCITIES is one big family” (CP10).

Lobbying was identified as one of the key strengths of the network: “EUROCITIES is well-acknowledged within the European Commission” (CP10). First, the role of cities was stated to become more relevant for the EU in recent years. Second, EUROCITIES would unite “the most important European cities on a political level”, thus the network’s voice would represent vital municipal stakeholders. It was noted that the European Commission would access to the local level – through EUROCITIES.

5.4. Cooperation and competition among TMNs
The relations between the networks were described as very cooperative, and manifest themselves in several different ways, following the following research question:

4. Do the TMNs compete or cooperate?

First, Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, and EUROCITIES – together with CEMR and Fedarene – jointly run the Covenant of Mayors’ Office (COMO). A Memorandum of Understanding and a work plan defines responsibilities and the decision-making progress.

Second, these three networks often cooperate to draft joint positions, as their bundled appearance would result in a “better recognition of our members [the cities]” (CP12). Furthermore, harmonising the networks’ activities would result in achieving more than an individual TMN could gain on its own: “pulling together gets you further than pulling on your own” (CP7). According to respondents of the TMNs, finding common grounds usually is a rather simple and straightforward process because they would already agree on the fundamental principle of strengthening the role of local authorities concerning energy and climate issues. Moreover, their respective network objectives would overlap to a large extent.

Third, the networks analysed in this study sometimes cooperate in common projects.

Fourth, Climate Alliance and Energy Cities operating a joint program called ‘Tandem’. Given Climate Alliance’s large share of German and Energy Cities’ equivalence to French municipalities (see above), its main idea is to always team up one German and one French city. That way, town twinnings are fostered and cross-border learning about energy-related issues is enhanced.

Fifth, besides these formal collaborations, there is connection at a personal level among Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, and EUROCITIES: Whereas representatives of the first two networks share an office in Brussels, the latter TMN is situated in the same building, which inevitably results in meeting and seeing each other.

In general, the respondents did not perceive competition between the networks: “there is room for everyone” (CP12). Furthermore, the TMNs’ different specifications were noted to be a useful addition to each other and opportunities to exchange and learn from each other.

The need to cooperate and coordinate was also considered necessary on demand of the networks’ cities: “the landscape of city networks and common cities initiatives is quite messy for cities to understand. […] This creates competition, confusion and frustration among cities that I can fully understand” (CP12). Consequently “streamlining our activities is what our members wants from us” (CP9).
Competition may arise when setting out to gain new, but also keep existing members, or with regard to the different products each TMN provides. Nevertheless, none of the networks’ interviewees considered competition as a serious issue. But, as one city representative put it: “these networks compete for time of our employees” (CP3). When faced with this statement, a network representative replied: “one way to deal with it is through our good services and performance – showing that we are worth the time” (CP7).

5.4.1. Other forums for cooperation mentioned
In addition to ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES, a few other networks and associations were mentioned where municipal contact persons in charge for environmental issues would meet.

Particularly relevant here, some respondents mentioned the Deutsche Städteetag (‘Association of German Cities’) as a platform used for regular meetings and exchange. Specifically, the Fachkommission Umwelt (‘Technical committee for the environment’) was stated to serve as opportunity for departments related to environment and climate to swap ideas and experiences. Furthermore, the 25 largest German cities would gather in the Arbeitskreis Energiemanagement (‘Task force for energy management’) to exchange on topics such as energy efficiency and renewable energies.

As a further German initiative, the German member cities of EUROCITIES cooperate in a ‘sub-network’. Initiated by Leipzig, the idea behind this non-formalised association is to coordinate a joint approach of the German cities, and bring forward jointly crafted positions.

5.5. Network focus and involvement
This section aims at answering the first part of the following research question:

5. With which networks do the sample cities cooperate the most (network focus and involvement), and why?

5.5.1. Focus of network activity in selected TMNs
Occurring as a general trend, each of the municipalities interviewed seemed to focus on one or two main networks that they would most often cooperate with. Although the majority of sample cities was a member in three TMNs, one interviewee summarized the sentiments expressed by the others in saying: “we are already quite busy with one main and one minor network that we want to engage in” (CP2). On the basis of the answers given during the interviews, the following overview (Table 5) attempts to list the cities’ network foci and what they use which TMN for: “you [as a staff member in the department of environment or alike] focus on that network that you consider the most important in technical terms” (CP8).

However, it does not claim completeness for two reasons. First, this aspect was not asked specifically, rather the following attributions are based on the city representatives’ description of which of the TMNs they work with the most. Second, in most of these cities, there are several contact persons for the various networks the municipality is a member of. Although the interviewees spoke about their city’s engagement in TMNs as whole, their statements might have been tied to their own personal experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>ICLEI</th>
<th>Energy Cities</th>
<th>Climate Alliance</th>
<th>EUROCITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Exchange of information / Awareness raising</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonn</td>
<td>Lobbying (on an international level; incl. mayoral support)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Project cooperation</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiburg</td>
<td>Lobbying (on an international level; incl. mayoral support)</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
<td>Exchange of information</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
<td>Lobbying (incl. mayoral support) / Exchange of information</td>
<td>Exchange of information</td>
<td>Project cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Exchange of information</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No or few recent activities</td>
<td>Exchange of information / Awareness raising</td>
<td>Lobbying (on a technical level) / Exchange of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuttgart</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lobbying (on a technical level) / Project cooperation</td>
<td>Exchange of information</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Overview of cities’ use of networks, green colouring indicating the city’s main TMN(s) for cooperation

These different usages of the TMNs are mostly consistent with their functions outlined in Chapter 5.2. Findings regarding the TMNs’ functions: Lobbying distinguishes between ‘lobbying, including mayoral support’ and ‘lobbying on a technical level’. ‘Exchange of information’ refers to the TMNs’ information management. ‘Project cooperation’ is based on the networks supporting projects. ‘Awareness raising’ is concerned with educational campaigns and initiatives aimed at sensitising the public. The networks’ function as ‘contact platform’ does not appear in this table, since all interviewees mentioned it. Often, it is a co-benefit of e.g. visiting the same conferences and meetings, or common project implementation.

5.5.2. Level of network involvement

The role of technical staff

Building on an aspect mentioned before, work time was mentioned as a scarce resource for the representatives of the cities. Often however, the network activities are work taken on voluntarily by the department’s or office’s staff. These additional tasks would require them “to see further than the end of their noses” (CP2). Hence, “the degree of a city’s activity in a network often hinges on personal engagement of a few” (CP10), who do so on top of their normal work (load). The willingness to set aside extra time for the networks is also appreciated by the TMNs themselves: “our network is based on these engaged and motivated people” (CP9).

The role of mayors

As a pattern, the role of the respective mayor in either driving or slowing down a city’s international engagement and thus its activity in these European networks was frequently noted. According to the respective interviewees, municipalities with a mayoral agenda to pursue an international orientation were: Bonn, Freiburg, and Heidelberg. In comparison mayors of Hamburg, Munich, and Stuttgart concentrated on local or regional spheres. Since this was a trend that emerged during the analysis of the empirical data, but was not a specific item in the interview guide, making a point about Berlin’s specific commitment in these TMNs was not possible.
In any case, “it is more than an institutional membership to a network, it becomes to human relations that we as staff at [our network] manage to create between individuals” (CP12). Therefore, the actual network involvement is highly dependent on either the technical staff or the mayor, which has also been noticed by the TMNs: “It is a big risk for our network – as soon as mayors are changing or key persons like the energy manager of the city leaves, there is a big risk of this city giving up its membership in [our network]” (CP12).

To reduce this person-bound dependency on at least the mayor, becoming a member in Climate Alliance by mayoral decree is insufficient – it has to be supported and formally endorsed by the city council. Thus, “membership and participation is structurally anchored in the city, so that it will last longer than the mayor’s terms of office” (CP9).
6. Discussion
This chapter first builds on some of the results stated before to answer the last pending research question. Subsequently, it is followed by reflections on this study. It closes with additional research questions that could not be addressed within the limited research design of this study.

6.1. Cities’ usage of the TMNs
Whereas the first part of the following research question was answered in the chapter before, this segment will examine the latter, based on the findings listed before:

5. With which networks do the sample cities cooperate the most (network focus and involvement), and why?

6.1.1. Unique selling points of each TMN
Table 5 and the data used to compile it allow to draw conclusions on both what the networks are primarily used for by each city, and which cities engage in them. Addressing the first issue, the networks can be characterised as follows. Interviewees whose municipalities are members of or have been active recently in ICLEI stated they would use the TMN mainly for lobbying including mayoral support, on an international level. Advocating for these cities not only implies that ICLEI advocates for a stronger role of the local level, but also support for this claim by their mayors actively participating in the network’s event. Interestingly, these respondents indicated that they cooperate little with other European local governments, and would rather use ICLEI’s international orientation to globally team-up with cities. Energy Cities was most commonly used for lobbying on a technical level and project cooperation, as well as to a lesser extent for an exchange of information. These attributions are also applicable to EUROCITIES. Lastly, municipal representatives signified they would use Climate Alliance mostly for exchange of information and awareness raising, and also for project cooperation.

Summing up these characterisations and differentiations, the TMNs can be labelled as such: ICLEI’s main strength evidently lies in lobbying on international level for their members concern by also involving its member cities’ mayors. Municipalities seem to turn to Energy Cities and EUROCITIES for the sake of lobbying with a view to the EU, project cooperation, and the exchange of information. Climate Alliance’s unique selling point – since none of the other networks were associated with this function – appears to be organising awareness raising events and campaigns in cooperation with its members.

6.1.2. Trend: reasons for cities’ involvement in certain TMNs
Regarding the respective cities that engage in these TMNs, a certain trend can be assessed from Table 5. Regarding ICLEI, only two out of the seven sample cities indicated very close relations to ICLEI. Besides the fact that Bonn and Freiburg hold the World and European Secretary of ICLEI, respectively, both mayors of these cities actively promote their city’s internationality. By way of an example, both of them hold positions in the Global and Regional Board of the network. In comparison, the interviewees from Stuttgart and Munich – neither city participating in ICLEI – signalised that lobbying on international and European level as well as promoting their cities on these stages would not be pursued by their respective mayors. As respondents from Hamburg explained, their city became a member of ICLEI at the behest of the then-mayor, who was both interested in environmental issues and promoting Hamburg internationally. But when a change of government also saw a change of parties, priorities on the mayor’s agenda altered as well. Since then, Hamburg’s involvement with ICLEI has been decreasing. Although Heidelberg seems to not be engaged in ICLEI recently, implying it would focus less on being an international city would be wrong. To the contrary,
its mayor has been heading Energy Cities as president for years and besides, Heidelberg may seek C40 for engaging internationally. The same might be true for Berlin, as its representative stated only few recent activities in ICLEI, but also engages in C40.

Drawing on the conclusion that membership in ICLEI might often be driven by the cities’ mayors is a partial explanation for the network’s emphasis on their events’ publicity. As such, if mayors actively engage in an international network and thus on non-local stages, there is a need to justify these activities: To citizens and hence potential electorates, the benefits of a municipality being involved in international matters might not become accessible at first. Rather, they might be interested in having the mayor’s agenda completely focused on local issues instead. Therefore, organising and taking part in large network events of good publicity is a way for these mayors to showcase their cities’ international engagement.

On the other side, where there was not or currently is not a mayoral agenda specifying a certain TMN to work with, cities usually cooperate with Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, and Climate Alliance. In Stuttgart, membership in Energy Cities is made use of frequently for joint projects and for exchange of information and experience, and thus is of great importance for the environmental and energy department. Furthermore, it was the technical level (in contrast to the mayoral level) that instigated the city’s joining to the network in the first place. Similarly, interviewees from Munich stated their current and former mayors would rather focus on a local than an international agenda. They cooperate with EUROCITIES and Climate Alliance the most, both accessions also tracing back to initiatives of heads of the technical departments. As for the case of Hamburg, after political backing for engagement in international urban networks and thus the budget to do so declined, the city’s engagement in these four TMNs was reduced to Climate Alliance. These three examples have in common that membership in Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, and Climate Alliance was sought by those departments dealing with climate and energy issues in their respective cities, and henceforth have been using them for exchanging experiences with peers, lobbying on a technical level, and project cooperation.

These interpretations sum up to the following Table 6, Table 5 Overview of cities’ use of networks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network involvement primarily driven by</th>
<th>ICLEI</th>
<th>Energy Cities</th>
<th>Climate Alliance</th>
<th>EUROCITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>High involvement</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonn</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>High involvement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiburg</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>Municipal staff</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>Municipal staff / mayor</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>High involvement</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>Municipal staff</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
<td>High involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuttgart</td>
<td>Municipal staff</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>High involvement</td>
<td>Low involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Overview of the cities’ level of involvement, green colouring indicating high involvement, grey colouring indicating low involvement
6.2. Reflections

There are several factors to consider that may have influenced the findings of this thesis, or even the validity of the results. As noted in the methods section, a number of methodological choices were made in order to manage the study within the time and financial constraints of a typical Master’s Thesis. In addition, I reflect below on several factors that might have influenced the balance and/or the quality of the data I was able to gather.

First, it might have made a difference if all the interviews had been conducted in person. As it was with the interview with representatives from Stuttgart, communicating face-to-face creates a more conversational atmosphere than speaking over the telephone. The personal conversation with the respondents in Stuttgart allowed to also react to the respondents’ facial expressions. However, a comparison between the interview data given in person and that over the phone yielded no difference in terms of depths and quality. Second, and probably more important is that the relevance of the answers given depends a great deal on the functional responsibility and competences of the interviewees. Some contact persons had a very good overview of her/his city’s network activities as a whole, some were responsible for only one or two TMNs and had only partial insight into the engagement in the other networks. As a way of addressing that issue, conducting interviews with all the network’s contact persons within one municipality – if applicable – would have resulted in a complete and thorough picture. Third, the extent of information shared by the respondents varied depending on how much time they had allocated for the interview. As this aspect solely relies on the participants’ willingness, the degree of its variability is difficult to improve. However, in future attempts the added value of the thesis’ results to them as respondents could be highlighted. This could raise their personal stakes in the study, which in turn might increase their disposition to take part in an interview. Fourth, although ICLEI is one unit of analysis, it was not possible to conduct an interview with representatives from this network during the time allotted for the thesis. One approach for prospective studies, if possible, could be to plan the interviews further ahead. This would at least increase the chances of the potential respondents’ availability. Lastly, since most of the interviews were conducted in German, some statements may have lost some of their original meanings in the translation process. A way of minimising this risk could have been to have the translations checked by a peer who is fluent in both German and English.

6.3. Further research questions

There are further research questions that this limited study could not address. First, the forms of lobbying identified above (lobbying, including mayoral support; lobbying on a technical level) could be further investigated. A more detailed comparison between these forms could be particularly interesting: What specific impacts does lobbying, including mayoral support have for the technical staff in a given municipality? How does lobbying on a technical level affect the mayoral agenda of a city?

Second, the communications and interactions between the EU and municipality – mediated by the TMNs – hold available additional research potential. Besides passing on information in both directions, do the networks impact the relation between European and local level?

Third, this study only found lobbying up the scale – from municipalities/TMN as their voice to the EU. But if only focused on the relations between cities, research might reveal mutual influence, whose reasons could be further investigated.
7. Conclusion

This study aimed at analysing the cooperation of a sample of German cities with ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES, which had been identified as the main transnational municipal networks (TMNs) in Europe dedicated to issues of climate protection. These cities included Berlin, Bonn, Freiburg, Hamburg, Heidelberg, Munich, and Stuttgart. Further, the thesis explored the sample’s specific use of these networks, and their perception of the functions provided by the TMNs.

Interviews were conducted with spokespersons of these networks (excluding ICLEI) and the cities to gain insight into their work. The thesis as a whole was led by these research questions:

1. How are the transnational municipal networks of interest (ICLEI, Climate Alliance, Energy Cities, and EUROCITIES) governed in practice? How can they be further classified? How effective are they?
2. These networks provide a range of services to their members. Which of these services are used the most by the sample cities?
3. What are the individual traits of each of these networks?
4. Do the TMNs compete or cooperate?
5. With which networks do the sample cities cooperate the most (network focus and involvement), and why?

The TMNs were identified as norm-formulating-, knowledge-generating-, and identity-constructing governance networks. Norms emerge from within and are enforced through network activities. Furthermore, these networks pool expertise, and information from their members, creating institutional know-how. In addition, membership in the TMNs fosters a common identity that is shared among their members.

Lobbying was one of the main network functions highlighted by most of the respondents. Generally, the cities’ staffs were pleased and satisfied with the TMNs’ work on advocating local governments’ concern on European level. Interviewees also welcomed that Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, EUROCITIES, and to a lesser extent ICLEI would cooperate to utter their demands in one coherent voice to EU institutions. Further, two forms of lobbying were recognised: First, ‘lobbying, including mayoral support’ indicates that mayors of the respective cities actively take part in the network’s lobby work. Second, ‘lobbying on a technical level’ describes a more indirect kind of lobbying, which takes influence through issuing position papers and hence representing urban interests and needs with regard to EU legislation.

Besides voicing their members’ concerns and demands from the bottom up, the TMNs serve as bi-directional interfaces. From the top down, they can spread news easily in their network structures. By making use of these networks, the EU can rely on processed and concentrated information that concerns a large amount of municipalities to include in its policy-making. At the same time, it only has to pass communications to the networks, which will distribute them further.

A closer look was taken at each network. ICLEI was praised by the cities for its internationality. The network was also accredited with good publicity events and a high public perception. On the downside of its international orientation, comparability between member cities was considered limited between members from all over the world. Also, due to its large structure, decision-making would sometimes go a long way. Climate Alliance’s unique selling points are its holistic approach to climate protection beyond questions of energy efficiency.
and renewable energies. It is also the only network committing its members to greenhouse gas emission reductions. Being the most extensive network of these TMNs, comparability here was perceived to be potentially difficult in that for smaller municipalities, learning would be easier from their bigger counterparts than vice versa. Project support was attributed as Energy Cities’ strength; its involvement in a project was seen as quality management. Leading the Covenant of Mayors Office, Energy Cities’ role in European lobbying was also perceived well. Events inspired by this TMN are supposedly characterised by “conviviality”. EUROCITIES was deemed as a good platform to meet, exchange, and discuss on a technical level. Results of these meetings, among others, are structurally used and fed into the network’s lobby work. Lobbying was also considered as one of EUROCITIES’ strength.

In general, relations between the TMNs were shaped by cooperation rather than competition: “there is room for everyone”. Furthermore, the TMNs’ different specifications were noted to be a useful addition to and would complement each other. These differences were considered as opportunities to exchange and learn from each other. Hence, these niches that the networks nest in distinguish them from each other.

After evaluating and analysing the data collected, ICLEI appears to be a transnational municipal network, in which memberships are often instigated and driven by the cities’ mayors. Therefore, good publicity is key for ICLEI to represent its own activities, but also to showcase the mayors’ environmentalism and international engagement. Membership Energy Cities, EUROCITIES, and Climate Alliance often seemed to be initiated and pursued by the technical departments: “you [as a staff member in the department of environment or alike] focus on that network that you consider the most important in technical terms”.
8. Acknowledgement

At the end of my thesis, I would like to thank all those people who made this study possible in the first place.

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor Marcus Carson at Stockholm Environment Institute. His advice throughout the research process was a great support to narrow down and successfully carry out the research design. Further, consultations with him at different stages of the study always helped me focus on the essentials rather than stray off the track. Lastly, his feedback – always constructive and enabling in its nature – contributed largely to the final structure and organisation of the thesis.

I would also like to thank Lars Rudebeck at the Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, for his guidance, which helped further improve the quality of this thesis.

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Finally, this paper would not have been possible without the time set aside by the interviewees from both the TMNs and the cities. It became clear that time was a scarce resource for these respondents. All the more I highly appreciate their willingness to make time for an interview. Furthermore, I value their openness to talk about their experiences with a view to network-city cooperation. This gave me necessary and valuable insights that allowed for interesting results and conclusions.
9. References


Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of The European Union - 2010/C 83/01.


10. Appendix
10.1. Interview guide: cities
(All the interviews with respondents from the cities were conducted in German, hence the interview guide is in German, too.)

**Persönlicher Hintergrund**
- [some information about myself]

**Datenschutz**

**Aufzeichnen**
[asking for the permission to record the interview]

[city] ist Mitglied verschiedener internationaler Netzwerke, u.a. [naming the networks that the city is a member of].

**Zuständigkeiten und Ansprechpartner**
- Wie sind die Zuständigkeiten für die jeweiligen Netzwerke bei Ihnen geregelt (z.B. ein Ansprechpartner pro Netzwerk)?
- Findet ein Austausch zwischen den Ansprechpartnern statt (z.B. gegenseitiges Update zu News der jeweiligen Netzwerke)?
- Wie ist der Austausch mit anderen Ämtern und Referaten, die z.B. Themen wie Klima- und Umweltschutz, Stadtplanung, Verkehrswesen, Energie, und Abfallwirtschaft bearbeiten?
  - (Wie oft informieren Sie diese über anstehende Events der Netzwerke?)
  - (Wie oft kommen diese Ämter auf Sie zu mit Ideen, die Sie dann an die Netzwerke herantragen?)

**Mitgliedschaft in den Netzwerken**
- Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zu den jeweiligen Netzwerken beschreiben?
- Wie oft stehen Sie mit den jeweiligen Netzwerken in Kontakt?
  - Wie oft mit jedem?
  - Wie wird die Ansprechbarkeit der Netzwerke eingeschätzt – zugänglich, leicht erreichbar?
- Wie werden Sie durch die Netzwerke informiert? Gibt es z.B. Newsletter der Netzwerke für die Mitglieder, z.B. zu anstehenden Events, Projektausschreibungen? / andere Formen?
  - (Informieren die Netzwerke nur über ihre eigenen Tätigkeiten, oder berichten Sie auch von anderen?)
- Wie oft finden Workshops oder Meetings statt, die von den jeweiligen Netzwerken organisiert werden?
  - Wie kann man sich dort einbringen, beispielsweise Themen nominieren?
  - Sind diese Themen und Fragestellungen auch oft relevant für Sie als Stadt [name of city]?
- Inwieweit greifen Sie auf das Informationsangebot der Netzwerke zurück, z.B. gesammelte Erfahrungen anderer Städte in Datenbanken?
  o Nicht nur best-practices selbst schreiben, sondern auch von anderen übernehmen
- Wie oft tauschen Sie sich mit anderen Städten aus, die auch Mitglied in ein oder mehreren dieser Netzwerke sind?
  o Bilden die Netzwerke Foren, damit sich Städte untereinander kennenzulernen und sich dann untereinander, in dem Fall unabhängig vom Netzwerk, austauschen?
  o “Gibt es Städte innerhalb des/der Netzwerke, zu denen Sie einen engeren Austausch und Kontakt haben?”
    ▪ viele gemeinsame Projekte / “lange gemeinsame Geschichte”?
    ▪ gleiche Beziehungsebene zu allen Mitgliedern, oder unterschiedlich?
- In den Netzwerken: Annahme, dass es aktivere und passivere Mitglieder gibt
  o Wird versucht, die Passiveren ins Boot zu holen, oder wird mit jenen zusammengearbeitet, die selbst ein aktives Interesse haben?
  o Generell: herrscht ein Klima des gemeinsamen Verständnisses, oder sind Austausche eher geprägt von konstruktiven Diskussionen?
  o Gemeinsame Zielvorstellungen, wohin man mit dem Netzwerk möchte?
- Welche anderen Funktionen stellen diese Mitgliedschaften aus Ihrer Sicht für die Stadt [name of the city] bereit?
- Inwieweit haben die Verpflichtungen zu Minderungsmaßnahmen im Zuge von Mitgliedschaften wie z.B. dem Klima-Bündnis die Klimaschutzziele der Stadt [name of the city] beeinflusst?
- Gesamteinschätzung der Zusammenarbeit mit Netzwerken
  o Zufrieden, wie die Netzwerke ihre Arbeit machen? Verbesserungsvorschläge?
  o Mehrwohrt, Mitglied in mehreren Netzwerken zum Klimaschutz zu sein
  o Wie viel wird konkret zu Klimaschutz kooperiert? Evtl. nur gute und nützliche Zusammenarbeit in anderen Belangen?
- [specific questions for each city]
10.2. Interview guide: networks

**Personal background**
- [some information about myself]

**Privacy**
All personal data will be anonymised, kept confidential and not disclosed to any third parties. The information will be used solely for research purposes, primarily for this Master's thesis. Possibly, results of this study will be worked into a research paper in cooperation with the "Stockholm Environment Institute", a Swedish environmental think tank.

**Recording**
[asking for the permission to record the interview]

- You issue a regular newsletter and you keep a database of best-practices from member cities – are there additional information you provide to your members?
- With regard to the webinar and the best-practices – do you have information on how often they are used by your members?
- How often do you meet up with your member cities (e.g. once a year for the General Meeting)?
- How often do you organise workshops?
- Do you know if member cities are cooperating now as a result of a common membership in your network?
- Which of the projects you as [name of the network] have done so far do you consider the most successful one?
- In which forms do you provide technical expertise?

- Are you in touch with national governments as well?
- Within the Covenant of Mayors Office (CoMo), you work together with CEMR, Climate Alliance, EUROCITIES and Fedarene.
  - How does this cooperation work in practice?
- Besides the CoMo, are there other forms of cooperation with networks like these?
- On international level, you also pursue the “Local Government Climate Roadmap”, along with ICLEI, EUROCITIES, the Climate Alliance, and C40. What actions have you implemented commonly with them so far?

- With regard to communicating with your member cities:
  - Assuming there are cities and municipalities that are rather active, and those who remain passive – how do you engage all of them?
- What would you consider your “unique selling point”, characteristic traits of your association, which make it special in comparison to other (European) networks?