Abstract

Understanding how climate information comes to matter. A dialogue on mutual learning about the role of co-production in urban climate governance in the cities of São Paulo and Hamburg.

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Cities worldwide are both key contributor to and severely affected by climate change. In consequence, urban governance is considered to play a key role with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation. While transdisciplinarity is advanced as instrumental approach to facilitate climate action and the co-production of climate services, the well-known science-policy gap widely persists. In our research, we aim to better understand and make aware of the complex dynamics in a multi-level governance context that eventually give meaning to climate facts. We explore the question, how the local context with its institutional, socio-cultural and material particularities affect the co-production and use of climate information in urban decision-making. Empirically, we analyse and compare the cities of São Paulo and Hamburg as case studies by looking at different governance arrangements (city-wide level, district level, and living labs) where the collaboration between science and policy happened to varying degrees. Through interviews and document analysis, we aim to reveal how perceptions of climate change, the use of scientific information and realisation of knowledge co-production shift over time and in relation to the different institutional or collaborative settings and, consequently, affect urban climate decision-making. The research aims to stimulate learning processes among and between researchers and city actors, as well as between the two cities in the Global South and Global North.

In our podcast-style video presentation, we aim to specifically illustrate and reflect on our personal learning process while engaging with the case studies. We – a sociologist from Brazil working on the case of São Paulo and a Geographer from Germany responsible for the case study in Hamburg – picture our ordinary online dialogue discussing our insights, thoughts and worries in the research process. Such digital dialogues, although not without facing structural challenges in the South-North context, represented the key moments of mutual learning in our research, as the pandemic also affected our project and prevented any possibility to meet and discuss in "real life". We will present, how our different disciplinary education and socialisation, as well as the individual insights from a systematic literature review and engaging with the case studies has led to different findings and assessments, and how our regular exchange on these insights has triggered mutual understanding and learning. Through these mutual insights, we increasingly understood how the local context with its specific practices, norms, narratives and framings affect climate-related activities and the use of climate information in decision-making. We will specifically highlight our recurring discussion on the role of social sciences in transdisciplinary climate research and how the analytical lens of co-production helped us to better understand the role of knowledge co-production in urban climate governance. In conclusion, our presented dialogue aims to picture the value of virtual exchange for learning across disciplinary and cultural divides, which in our case considerably contributed to better understand that and how institutional and socio-cultural factors matter when designing knowledge co-production in cities. We close our presentation with some questions to the audience aiming for a critical feedback and reflection of our insights.