

„Climate plan for Prague“ as a ceremonial gesture: perceptions of municipal politicians and bureaucrats

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Abstract: Climate change is recognized as a large-scale issue resolved mainly through global or national policy initiatives. However, municipalities are getting involved too. The paper will focus on the political and bureaucratic efforts associated with climate change responses in the capital of the Czech Republic – Prague.

The main subject of our research interest will be one of the key policy documents approved by the City council in 2019 „Climate plan for Prague 2030“ (Klimatický plán hl. m. Prahy do roku 2030). Regarding this document I will observe two layers: policy-pragmatic and semantic - in both of these layers, the role of politico-administrative relations will be highlighted.

The first – policy-pragmatic – layer will describe the specific processes and motivations that led to the drafting and approval of this policy document (the document was preceded by other documents, commitments to international networks and conventions, etc., and has also gone through several commissions). I will focus on the history of the document and the policy infrastructure associated with it; I will interview both public administration employees and politicians involved in the process to understand the logics behind the document infrastructure and also roles these distinct actors play in it. Previous research shows that the nature of the document is rather formal - no financial resources have been allocated to the climate plan, nor does the document have a strong promoter.

In the second – semantic – layer, I look at how this document’s formal nature is dealt with by political leaders on the one hand and bureaucrats (often having a strong environmental background), on the other. To analyse the meanings associated with either explicit or implicit (or even self-) negotiations of the non-implementable status of the Climate plan, I will use the theoretical perspective of policy as a myth and ceremony. The perspective focuses on the phenomenon where policy does not focus on implementation here and now, but creates only the appearance that the public policy problem is considered important and creates only non-binding structures that can be used in future. The ambition of the paper is to contribute to deepening and extending this theoretical framework.

In this paper, I will empirically draw on document analysis and expert interviews.

The empirical aim of the paper is to explore possibilities of connecting the climate change public policy document agenda with the concepts of policy as myth and ceremony. The theoretical aim of the paper is to explore the possibilities of connecting the concepts of policy as myth and ceremony with the politico-administrative scholarship.

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