



ICLEI and Global Climate Change: a local governments' organizational attempt to reframe the problem of global environmental change

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► To cite this version:

Adrien Labaye. ICLEI and Global Climate Change: a local governments' organizational attempt to reframe the problem of global environmental change. Political science. 2010. dumas-00825484

HAL Id: dumas-00825484

<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-00825484>

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MA International Organization: intergovernmental and non-governmental
organizations

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ICLEI and Global Climate Change

—

A Local Governments' Organizational Attempt to Reframe the
Problem of Global Environmental Change

Environment and Development Specialization

2010

Under the direction of

Stéphane La Branche, Climate Researcher

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Acknowledgements

I wish to thank

*The two ‘memories’ of ICLEI, Jeb Brugmann and
Konrad Otto-Zimmermann for the time and
inspiration they gave me while telling the story of
the movement and its organization;*

*Yunus Arikan, for the interview and his guidance
during the six months of my internship;*

*My teacher, Stéphane La Branche, for his
guidance and support;*

*Susanne and Richard for the proof-reading and
feedback;*

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Introduction

With seventeen years of existence and more than a thousand members involved in 2010, the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign is the largest global initiative of cities to reduce their local greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in order to preserve the global climate system¹.

While its positive local impacts are emphasized in many occasions (Betsill, 2001), a number of scholars have also documented the CCP as being part of the global environmental governance understood as a multilevel or polycentric process (Noah, 2008; Bulkeley and Betsill, 2004, 2006): “The Cities for Climate Protection Campaign (CCP) does more than mediate between the formal arenas of local government and the global climate regime; it has created its own arena of governance through the development of norms and rules for compliance with the goals and targets of the network.”²

A similar initiative, the Covenant of Mayors³ that encourages European local leaders to commit to a reduction of their GHG emissions by 20% by 2020, is mainly supported by the European Commission who provides financial aid and leadership; however the CCP is an initiative of local governments for local governments. It has been launched in 1993 by a coalition of committed local governments, the International Council for Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), following a project that explored a methodology to measure urban GHG emissions in 14 cities around the world⁴. Only eight months after Rio and the adoption of the UNFCCC, and two years before its first Conference of Parties (COP), local governments

¹ ICLEI: *ICLEI International Progress Report: Cities for Climate Protection*, 2006. Viewed 20 August 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/Programs/CCP/CCP_Reports/ICLEI_CCP_International_2006.pdf.

² Page 151 in Betsill, M. and Harriet Bulkeley, (2006). Cities and the Multilevel Governance of Climate Change. *Global Governance* 12 (2006), 141–159.

³ Source: <http://www.euMayors.eu/>, viewed 20 August 2010.

⁴ *The Urban CO₂ Reduction Project*, in Brugmann, J. (2009). Welcome to the Urban Revolution: How Cities are Changing the World. New York: Bloomsbury Press; and in Betsill, M. and H. Bulkeley (2004). Transnational Networks and Global Environmental Governance: The Cities for Climate Protection Program. *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun., 2004), pp. 471-493. The original reference is never mentioned.

(LGs) were already initiating their own space of climate governance, backed by a young organization the newly born ICLEI⁵.

Bulkeley and Betsill have demonstrated how the CCP Campaign as a transnational network is truly participating to the global environmental governance (2004, 2006) and is instrumental in the process of policy learning by cities regarding their efforts to engage climate actions (Betsill, 2001; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004). The two scholars demonstrate “that [these resources’] networks are held together through the creation of financial, political, and discursive ‘glue’, the exchange of information and other material resources being a means through which such connections are secured rather than being an end in itself”⁶. But how can one understand how this ‘glue’, these ‘connections’ are ‘secured’ without looking at the instrumental role of ICLEI, the organization that created, runs and sustains the CCP network?

Certainly, the two scholars recognize this role, but they have not accounted ICLEI as a crucial parameter for this ‘transnational network’ (CCP): the way they mention ICLEI is always as an external factor⁷. No organization is contingent; it is the result of a building process. Hence, we stand that the history of CCP is closely linked to the evolution of the organization that runs it: without ICLEI there would be no CCP. Therefore, overlooking this aspect would limit the understanding one can get of the participation of such transnational networks to the global environmental governance. Conversely, exploring the evolution of an organization like ICLEI can help to better understand how local governments organized in transnational network(s) can secure their participation to “new arenas of governance”⁸, and while reframing their old energy and environment challenges as part of global climate change, how they push for a wider reframing of global environmental change and its associated governance.

⁵ ICLEI was created in 1990 under the auspices of the International Union of Local Authorities and the United Nations Environment Program, gathering more than 200 local representatives in New York in the UN headquarters.

⁶ Betsill, M. and Harriet Bulkeley, (2004), op cit. Page 490. Going further, the authors introduce the concept of reframing: “The CCP has aided the reframing of existing concerns for energy and the environment in terms of climate change, creating knowledge about the local possibilities for addressing climate change, and generating norms about the value of doing so”, Page 481.

⁷ Betsill, M. and Harriet Bulkeley, (2004): throughout the article the scholars write that the CCP program “was established”, “is run”, “sponsored, etc.

⁸ “CCP created its own arena of governance”, page 151 in Betsill, M. and Harriet Bulkeley, (2006). Cities and the Multilevel Governance of Climate Change. *Global Governance* 12 (2006), 141–159.

Through its advocacy work in UN forums like the Commission on Sustainable Development or the UNFCCC, ICLEI is clearly pushing for an understanding of the process towards global sustainability in which local governments play a forefront role in the design of the global policies and their implementation at the local level. This message or framing could be wrapped up in one sentence: “Sustainable development globally is about the big picture; this big picture is composed of many smaller, local ones.”⁹ During the 18th session of the CSD, Local Authorities have been allowed to take the floor eighteen times; at each intervention, on each of the discussion topics, their representatives insisted on the role local actors (have to) play in global environmental governance. Doing so, they are striving to promote their (re)framing of the problem and, above all, of its solutions: cities are responsible for 75% of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but cities are also taking effective action to mitigate climate change through initiatives like the CCP.

So what is the big picture?

Global Environmental Change

*“Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level.”*¹⁰

The IPCC clearly defines – Goffman or Snow would say “frames” – the physical problem of climate change as a global phenomenon. The now well-accepted argumentation of how critical climate change is for our human societies will be spared here¹¹. For the UN Secretary General it is the “defining challenge of our era”¹². Nevertheless, climate change is not the only environmental challenge to seriously endanger the conditions of life on earth.

⁹ Local Authorities Statement at CSD-18, United Nations, New York 13 May 2010. Intervention pronounced by ICLEI in name of Local Authorities, source: ICLEI archives.

¹⁰ IPCC, 2007: Climate Change 2007, Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 2.

¹¹ Thousands of articles acknowledge this generally accepted evidence; the so-called “Climate Gate” that had agitated the media and destabilized the IPCC during the second half of 2009, has lost any tangible ground with the outcome of the investigation led by a Commission set by the House of the Commons in UK, (cf. Adam, David, (2010): Climategate scientists cleared of manipulating data on global warming. *The Guardian*, 8 July 2010).

¹² Ban Ki-moon (2008), UN Secretary General, viewed 22 August 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28458>.

Indeed, UNEP's fourth Global Environmental Outlook (GEO 4)¹³ describes unprecedented environmental change at global and regional levels in four intertwined areas: atmosphere, land, water, and biodiversity; climate change being affected and affecting the four. Already, in 1987, the Brundtland Report was outlining this harsh reality: "Humanity's inability to fit its activities into that [earth] pattern [of clouds, water, greenery and soils] is changing planetary systems, fundamentally"¹⁴.

In 2009, in a ground-breaking article, titled "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity"¹⁵, a large group of earth scientists led by Johan Rockström tried to identify and quantify planetary boundaries that should not be crossed by human development to prevent dramatic environmental change. According to the authors, three of nine interlinked planetary boundaries have already been overstepped: climate change, rate of biodiversity loss, and changes to the global nitrogen cycle. For Esty, the world is facing a "particularly challenging set of transboundary global environmental problems"¹⁶. The scale, their transboundary character and the inter-linkages of these environmental challenges led the scientific and political communities to frame them into one encompassing concept: the global environmental change.

The discrepancy between the 'global' problem and its 'international' treatment

Hence, earth scientists have defined global environmental change as a global issue. However, all the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) have framed the answer to the issue as an *international* effort. We stand that there is a major discrepancy between the physical problem of *global* environmental change and its *international* – between nations – treatment by policy-makers and many scholars. The most symbolic MEA, the UNFCCC, has been signed in 1992, in Rio, during the Earth Summit¹⁷. In its preamble it acknowledges "that

¹³ UNEP, 2007: Fourth Global Environmental Outlook: environment for development. UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya. Viewed 16 August 2010, <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>.

¹⁴ Paragraph 1, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987: *Our Common Future*, Dir. Gro Harlem Brundtland, United Nations, New York.

¹⁵ Rockström, J. et al (2009), Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity. *Ecology and Society* 14(2): 32. Then republished as an abridged version in *Nature* 461, 472-475.

¹⁶ Esty, D.C. (2008), Rethinking Global Environmental Governance to Deal with Climate Change: The Multiple Logics of Global Collective Action. *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2008, 98:2, 116–121.

¹⁷ Along with the two other so-called "Rio Conventions": the Convention for Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response”¹⁸. This paragraph illustrates perfectly the confusion of categories that arises around global environmental changes. In the same sentence, it acknowledges the “global nature” of climate change and automatically suggests that the response to this challenge should be “international”, and that “it calls for the [...] cooperation of all the countries”. Though *global* goes beyond countries.

Certainly, the text refers to countries or nations because it is written by nation-states within the UN system built on the premise that parties should be sovereign nation-states. It certainly fits the (neo) realist paradigm in political sciences that centers the analysis of international relations on sovereign states – indeed they look at *international relations* not *global affairs*. But, sixteen years after the Framework Convention on Climate Change entered into force¹⁹, the global climate problem of collective action is still not solved. Even worse, there is no proof that the UNFCCC negotiations will be able to deliver the “comprehensive agreement” it was supposed to deliver in Copenhagen in December 2009. Now, there is even a negotiation item that looks at the legal implications of a possible gap between the Kyoto Protocol commitments that are due to end by 2012, and the future period of commitments²⁰. This means in simple words that the UN system falls short to address the problem of climate change, and so do main analytical paradigms - neorealism and the conventional theory of collective action – to offer decision-makers the right analytical tools to help them solving the problem.

One should not forget what *global* environmental change means; that all the scales experience environmental changes. This is actually where the whole complexity of addressing the meta-issue of collective action arisen by global environmental change lies: it is the result of human activities settled in millions of different locations, constrained by a multiplicity of

¹⁸ Preamble UNFCCC text, viewed 20 August 2010, <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

¹⁹ The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994 as a framework convention to be further elaborated ; the Kyoto Protocol adopted in 1997 is a first attempt to enforce the text, viewed 23 August 2010, http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/status_of_ratification/items/2631.php

²⁰ UNFCCC, 20 July 2010. FCCC/KP/AWG/2010/10: “Legal considerations relating to a possible gap between the first and subsequent commitment periods”, viewed 23 August 2010, <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/awg13/eng/10.pdf>.

factors. The familiar motto “Think globally, act locally” hits right in the middle of the reality of a global phenomenon that cannot be solved only at the top level, between nations. This is particularly true and obvious with climate change, as Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom²¹ writes: “While many of the effects of the climate change are global, the causes of climate change are the actions undertaken by individuals, families, firms, and actors at a much smaller scale”²².

A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Global Collective Action Problems

In a background paper to the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2010: Development in a Changing Climate*, Elinor Ostrom urged for “A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change”²³. Building upon forty years of empirical observation of collective action problems linked to common-pool resources²⁴, and thousands of references to practical situations where individuals are cooperating through original institutional systems that fit neither the market approach nor the central authority assumption, she criticizes the conventional theory of collective action based on Olson’s theoretical work²⁵, because of its lacks of empirical support. A theory of “collective inaction”²⁶, she suggests, has driven the repertoires of action of policy-makers at the global level and is proving now to be incapable of providing a relevant analytical framework to solve complex collective action problems such as climate change.

In a ground-breaking attempt to provide a new analytical framework, she encourages us to approach collective action problems through a polycentric approach where the emphasis is put on moving away from the central authority or the market solutions as an inescapable alternative. Thus, she argues that “global [climate] solutions negotiated at a global level, if not

²¹ Elinor Ostrom has been awarded The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2009 "for her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons", source: nobelprize.org.

²² Ostrom, E. (2009). A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change. World Bank Policy Research working paper no. WPS 5095, Oct 2009, page 4.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Her analysis is put together for the first time in 1990 in her book *Governing the Commons*. She draws on a compilation of interdisciplinary CPRs case studies initiated by a group of researchers at the Indiana University. She mentions that the number of cases was approaching 5,000 in 1989 (page XV). The massive empirical effort undertaken by Ostrom and her colleagues of Indiana University is contrasting with the relatively low empirical support of the conventional theoretical analysis of collective action, in particular Olson’s contribution. In Ostrom, E. (1990): *Governing the Commons, the Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York : Cambridge University Press.

²⁵ Olson, M. (1965). *Logic of Collective Action*. Harvard University Press, 1965 (1971 2nd ed.).

²⁶ Ostrom, E (2009), op cit. Page 8.

backed up by a variety of efforts at national, regional, and local levels, however, are not guaranteed to work well”²⁷. Conversely, “to solve climate change in the long run, the day-to-day activities of individuals, families, firms, communities, and governments at multiple levels – particularly those in the more developed world – will need to change substantially”²⁸. She eventually recommends to “self-consciously adopt a polycentric approach to the problem of climate change in order to gain the benefits at multiple scales as well as to encourage experimentation and learning from diverse policies adopted at multiple scales”²⁹.

Globalizing Local Environmental Issues

Nineteen years before Ostrom’s paper, ICLEI initiated a global movement of collective learning on environmental policies at the local level. Indeed, in 1990, at the time of the founding congress in New York, environmental issues at the local level were understood as local problems specific to local contexts and conditions. The current ICLEI Secretary General, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, testifies:

*“Nowadays, everybody talks about global networks; at that time it was not there. This congress was the first of this kind, and what city participants like myself, discovered, was that, basically, the main challenges are all the same. The severity of issues can be different: the water issue is more pressing here and less there. But they all had water issues, they all had air pollution, at that time there were severe air pollution issues, some more, some less. What was very surprising was that some cities had already found solutions when other cities were still asking themselves, “what can we do?”. So they suddenly discovered that others were ahead, they could learn from them, take experiences from them and this learning was so... in a way, exciting because we wouldn’t have expected that a city in Germany could learn from a city in Brazil.”*³⁰

So what ICLEI is now, is the result of a (rational) effort to build this “global network” that organizes at the global and regional levels the sharing of information and experiences on how

²⁷ Ibid, Page 4.

²⁸ Ibid, Page 4.

²⁹ Ostrom, E (2009), op cit. Page 32. This paper is followed by another in the journal *Global Environmental Change*, which extends her analysis from climate change to the broader scope of global environmental change: Ostrom, E. (2010). Polycentric systems for coping with collective action and global environmental change. *Global Environmental Change*, available online 3 August 2010. Permanently accessible at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2010.07.004>

³⁰ Interview of Konrad Otto-Zimmermann realized by the author the 28 August 2010 in Bonn, Germany. In 1990, he was the Head of the Environment Department of the City of Freiburg, Germany.

to find solutions to local environmental problems that are similar in many places of the globe. This experience is one side of the globalization of environmental problems.

Another side of the coin is the reframing that happened in many municipalities and regional governments of environmental issues that were understood as local challenges into problems that are now part of the “big picture”. As Betsill reports, programs like the CCP campaign contributed to “localizing climate change”³¹ as it aided the reframing of prior knowledge and concerns in terms of climate change – as mentioned a few paragraphs before. In addition, in parallel of these information sharing and reframing experiences among local governments, ICLEI has also been actively advocating the cause of LGs before nation-states.

Localizing Global Environmental Change and its Governance

As a mirroring process of ICLEI’s efforts to build a worldwide movement, the organization has also promoted local governments’ legitimacy to take part in the global environmental affairs, which is not thinkable in a traditional Westphalian system that only recognizes nation-states as a legitimate level of government. Though, since 1648³² and religion wars, the big picture has been drastically transformed, and in particular by the emergence of transboundary issues like climate change. Global environmental changes have triggered the emergence of the concept of global environmental governance.

Seen through the conceptual lens of realism or neo-liberal institutionalism, global environmental governance is all about states, either because they cause global environmental degradation or because they conduct global governance³³. It is then generally conceptualized as a “cascade”³⁴, where subnational and local levels of government simply implement MEAs forged by nation-states. However, as it is cleverly argued by Betsill and Bulkeley (2004), this understanding is losing its ground as critiques grow.

³¹ Betsill, M. (2001). Mitigating Climate Change in U.S. Cities: Opportunities and Obstacles. *Local Environment* 6:393-406.

³² Date of the signature of the Westphalian Treaties, considered as the beginning of contemporary international relations.

³³ Betsill, M. and H. Bulkeley (2004). Transnational Networks and Global Environmental Governance: The Cities for Climate Protection Program. *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Jun., 2004), pp. 471-493.

³⁴ Bulkeley, H. and M. Betsill. (2003). *Cities and Climate Change: Urban Sustainability and Global Environmental Governance*. London: Routledge.

Indeed, other definitions of global environmental governance are more and more used by scholars to understand the processes under way. Thus, the definition defended by Speth and Haas in their book *Global Environmental Governance*³⁵ might be a good example of how this concept can be understood beyond the hermeneutic obsession of the nation state. One should first consider a broad definition of global governance: “Governance is the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest”³⁶. This definition of governance includes a vast array of processes beyond the governmental actions; “other processes – formal and informal – communities employ to decide what is in their common interest, and how to act collectively”, add Speth and Haas³⁷. The two scholars then define the global environmental governance as the intersection of the global governance and environmental affairs. Hence, the definition chosen here does not reduce the analysis of the decision-making to the nation-state level as it is often the case when one looks at the UN system as *the* global governance body³⁸. Speth and Haas’ understanding allows to using the concept of global environmental governance as a *meta or polycentric system*³⁹ within which collective efforts that intend to solve environmental collective action problems take place, be they occur at various levels (vertically and horizontally) of government: international, regional, national, subnational or local; formal or informal; private or public. Of course this approach considerably complexifies the understanding of global environmental governance, but while earth scientists permanently refine their climatic models using ever more powerful calculators, political and social scientists should not lag behind in refusing to adapt their theoretical frameworks to

³⁵ Speth, J. G. and P. Haas, (2006). *Global Environmental Governance*. Washington, DC: Island Press,

³⁶ The Commission on Global Governance, 1995: *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 4.

³⁷ Speth, J. G. and P. Haas, (2006). *Op cit*, page 3.

³⁸ This is for instance the case of Daniel Esty, who focuses on the interactions between governmental actors (nation-states and intergovernmental organizations), see Esty, D.C. (2008). *Rethinking Global Environmental Governance to Deal with Climate Change: The Multiple Logics of Global Collective Action*. *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings* 2008, 98:2, 116–121.

³⁹ These terminologies are not used by the two scholars, but by the author of this paper.

problems that are getting more and more complex. As the 2009 Nobel Prize of Economics recently said: “We must learn how to deal with complexity”⁴⁰.

The purpose and ambition of the present essay is to contribute to the understanding of a fragment of this complexity by learning how local governments are building new ways to deal with global problems at the local level, a process that is not an insulated effort. It is embedded into a global reframing of the development paradigm around the “new” concept of sustainable development.

Sustainability: a Horizon for a Multilevel Norm

In 1987, the Brundtland Report defines the concept of sustainable development as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Since the 1987 UN Resolution A/RES/42/187⁴¹ that adopted the report and mentioned in its preamble that sustainable development “should become a central guiding principle of the United Nations, governments and private institutions, organizations and enterprises”, the concept gradually imposed itself to the whole UN system and beyond, including multilateral development banks⁴², most of the states, or private entities. Indeed for these latest, sustainable development has become a powerful motto, in particular in transnational corporations. If, for sure, not fully implemented, sustainable development is widely used in the language of policy-making in both public and private spheres; it has clearly become a norm⁴³ at the global level.

At the local level, the concept of sustainable development received an extraordinary push during the United Nations’ Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, with the adoption of the

⁴⁰ Elinor Ostrom in Hinnefeld, S. (2009): “We must learn how to deal with complexity”, professor tells world in Nobel Prize lecture. *Indiana University Communications*. viewed 24 August 2010, <http://www.heraldtimesonline.com/stories/2009/12/09/news.qp-6644611.sto>

⁴¹ A/RES/42/187, resolution of the General Assembly, titled *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, adopted the 11 December 1987.

⁴² The World Bank has made the principle of sustainable development the axis of its reform in the 1990s and 2000s; it became the central pillar of its strategy to address poverty alleviation.

⁴³ Defined as “a principle to be implemented (it is a goal not a compulsory condition) and that arises from rules or institutional routines”, page 614 in Labranche, S. (2002). *La transformation des normes de participation et de durabilité en valeurs ? Réflexions pour la théorie des régimes*. *Revue Études Internationales*, vol.34, no.4, Pp.611-629. Free translation from the French original text.

Agenda 21. Indeed, under the leadership of the Conference Chair⁴⁴, the Earth Summit's main outcome gave a particular space to the role of every actor at various scales and in different sectors. Thus, the Agenda 21 is known to be one of the UN texts that is the most inclusive of the various stakeholders (Major Groups) – youth, women, indigenous people, etc... In the chapter 28, a particular emphasis has been put on the role of local governments and municipal authorities in achieving global sustainability through the implementation of Local Agendas 21. This specific chapter resulted in a historic global movement of more than 10,000 local and subnational governments in 115 countries that put in place Local Agendas 21⁴⁵ (LA21). Rarely forced, but often encouraged to do so, local governments have embraced worldwide the norm of sustainability.

To the author of the present paper, initiatives like LA21 hit right in the middle of Elinor Ostrom's recommendation "to encourage experimentation and learning from diverse policies adopted at multiple scales". A sole chapter among forty others triggered a worldwide movement to rethink the local development according to the principles of sustainability and participation at the closest level of government of hundreds of millions of people, if not billions. Despite the absence of any comprehensive assessment of the successes and failures of these Local Agendas 21, the way it spread around the globe can be considered as a success. Even more that these initiatives are meant to directly – not through political representation – involve the stakeholders in a collective process to define their common interest in order to integrate the tremendous pressures of a changing environment. Therefore, maybe more than other kinds of policies this type of initiative seems to have the potential of adapting the daily behaviors of individuals and communities to a fragile and resource-constrained environment, be it local or global. But what is behind these initiatives? What kind of organizational structure is orchestrating them?

How can one capture the organizational reality behind new arenas of governance ?

⁴⁴ Maurice Strong, the Chair of the UNCED, was firmly convinced that the role of each actor of the society should be addressed. His leadership made possible the adoption of the draft that became the Agenda 21, the Chapter 28 being drafting receiving all its input from ICLEI (see Chapter 3 on LA21).

⁴⁵ Bruggmann, J. (2009). *Welcome to the Urban Revolution: How Cities are Changing the World*. Bloomsbury Press, New York. Page 205.

In the organizational literature, both the Anglo-Saxon ‘organizational behaviour’ approach and its French counterpart ‘la sociologie des organisations’, look at the interactions of actors inside the organization to explain its existence and evolution. The case of ICLEI poses a theoretical difficulty to anyone who embarks into studying its organizational functioning. Indeed, ICLEI is not only an organization with a legal existence, a budget, a staff and activities, but also a vast movement of local governments. From that moment, looking only at the ‘organization’ – its structure – is not satisfying as it would reduce ICLEI to a simple organization like a company. Fortunately, a number of scholars from various disciplines have built an analysis of organizations and the movements they represent. Social Movements’ Organizations (SMOs), a “science of organized activism”⁴⁶, bridges the gap between the ‘pure’ organizational studies and the literature on community organizations and advocacy groups, in a “morphological investigation”⁴⁷. From the analysis of the genesis to the study of conflicts, from resources’ mobilization to identity and frame production, from macro to *meso* levels, the SMOs’ approach seems to be able to provide the analyst with a broad theoretical framework that should allow to illuminating ICLEI’s case.

Defining a social movement as “a collective action that is motivated by a preoccupation of public good to promote or a public bad to avoid, and that identifies its adversaries to fight against, in order to make possible processes of participation, redistribution or recognition”⁴⁸, ICLEI is a social movement as much as it is an organization: it is a social movement organization. This definition introduces the idea that the movement is driven by a vision of a common horizon where values play an important role; a dimension that is missing when one considers solely the definition of collective action⁴⁹. Indeed, ICLEI is uniting local governments around a vision of global sustainability⁵⁰ as a horizon to achieve, a common

⁴⁶ Cefaï, D. (2007). *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on ? Les théories de l’action collective*. Paris, 2007 : Editions La Découverte, 727 pages. Page 331.

⁴⁷ Ibid, page 332.

⁴⁸ Ibid, page 15.

⁴⁹ “Collective action is designating any attempt to build a collective, more or less formalized/institutionalized, by individuals who seek to reach a common goal, in contexts of cooperation and competition with other collectives.” Ibid, page 8.

⁵⁰ This vision is never really defined by ICLEI, global sustainability appearing even more as a value associated with a common good able to cope with global environmental change, a common ‘bad’ to avoid. The mission of ICLEI is officially “to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local

good to promote in a strategy to earn global recognition as a relevant level of government to address global environmental change, the common ‘bad’.

ICLEI, as any other social movement – or “sustainability movement”⁵¹ – is promoting a proper discourse organized through what Erving Goffman was the first to identify as “frames”⁵². Those “collective action frames”⁵³ are built and used by social movements’ actors in “framing processes” defined as “the generation, diffusion, and functionality of mobilizing and countermobilizing ideas and meanings”⁵⁴. In 1990, when Jeb Brugmann convened Konrad Otto-Zimmermann and his counterparts they realized that they were facing the same problems, they certainly saw that as an “exciting” opportunity to pool information resources, but they also started to engage in a process of “meaning construction”⁵⁵ that is still underway twenty years later. Collective action frames are inspiring collective action but they also serve to legitimate the activities and determine the mobilization of actors around commonly shared issues.

Methodology and Hypotheses

Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) note the fact that “networks of local governments have largely been notable by their absence from discussions of transnational networks in the international relations literature”⁵⁶; from discussion in the international relations should we just say. From this starting point it is not easy to develop a methodology to try to understand ICLEI’s contribution. Nevertheless, the SMO literature encourages us to approach our subject as the product of a process spanning over two decades. A particular attention will be given to the moments of emergence of the organization itself but also of its initiatives; each new

actions.” Source: ICLEI charter, viewed 22 August 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/governance/Charter/ICLEI_Charter_and_By-Laws_2006_changed- v2.pdf

⁵¹ If the vocable ‘social movement’ has been coined after the analysis of groups promoting socialism, one could now talk about ‘sustainability or sustainable movements’, the struggle for poverty eradication and development being reframed into a now well established sustainability paradigm.

⁵² Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper, 1974. According to Benford and Snow (2000), the concept of frame has considerable currency in today’s social sciences.

⁵³ Benford, Robert D.; Snow, David A. Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assesment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000, Vol. 26 Issue 1, p.611-639. Page 614.

⁵⁴ Ibid, page 612.

⁵⁵ Ibid, page 614.

⁵⁶ Page 472, Betsill and Bulkeley (2004), op cit.

initiative revealing the evolution of the movement's discourse and the development of its organizational structure. Of course, this analysis cannot be comprehensive. Therefore the focus will be set on the World Secretariat (WS) as the global head of the movement, where the rationale is being generated and condensed into an official common discourse, into a collective action frame.

The central questions that will be asked are the following. What has been the role of ICLEI (the organization), and its WS in particular, in building a common identity within the movement around a common set of values? How the discourse and activities of ICLEI has evolved over time in relation to its environment? In general, the main interrogation resides in the characterization of an organizational reality that is behind the programs and discourses.

The main hypothesis is that ICLEI is a highly strategic cognitive construction to offer an audience a set of discursive and technical tools to address and reframe their local environmental problems as part of global environmental change. Doing so they would promote a reframing of global environmental change as the result of local actions, and, as a consequence, they 'localize' the solution to the collective action problem. It leads to three sub-hypotheses: (a) ICLEI, as a normative movement, is engaged in a long process of meaning construction for its members that allows common values to be defined, discourses to be elaborated: the collective action frame to be set; (b) ICLEI, as a technical organization, is engaged in a process of capacity-building, and expertise production and distribution; (c) these two processes would lead to the reframing of local governments' role from a problem to one part of a polycentric solution to global environmental change.

To test these hypotheses, analytical tools from the social movement organization literature will be mobilized and are presented in Part I. The two subsequent parts (Part II and III) will be condensing the proper argumentation, the story of ICLEI.

The main thread of this paper is historic. However, in order to better understand how the various components have evolved over time, we will allow ourselves certain amplitude in terms of historic deviations. Eventually, we have to be aware that this effort to understand the logic behind the emergence and evolution of ICLEI is in itself, on purpose or not, an exercise

of cognitive construction, an attempt to build a narrative out of an array of contexts, events, and actors that are all driven to some extent by their own contingency.

Part I. Laying Down the Theoretical Framework

Understanding the complex and evolving nature of an organization generally requires a solid and vast framework for analysis; it is particularly true when the organization is as complex as ICLEI. A basic organizational description helps to understand why. The organization is composed of two levels. The first level describes around 200 permanent staff working in 13 different offices around the world, 13 legally independent entities that are united under the ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability's flag. The second level is composed of more than 1,000 members around the world. These members are described as local governments (LGs) that usually take the form of municipal corporations. ICLEI is then undertaking sustainability projects and programs in support to its members, and represent them in global and regional sustainability forums ranging from the UNFCCC to the European Commission workshop or before national ministries. Even with this very simple description of the organizational structure and the activities it undertakes, a lot of questions are already rising: how do legally independent entities act as one at the global level? How do they ensure a common strategic vision? How is a common discourse built? What bring together different actors in various countries some being powerful metropolis' governments like Paris or New York City and others towns' administration with seemingly less bargaining power?

As mentioned in the introduction, the variety of questions suggested while looking at ICLEI led us to mobilize the concepts of social movement organization (SMO). The notion of SMO refers less to a consolidated theory than to a broad theoretical corpus one can mobilize to understand how the organizations of social movements emerge, how they evolve, how they 'talk', etc⁵⁷. Quite often, the SMO literature is very specific to protest movements on national political stages or looking extensively at the linkages between peculiar political ideologies and the forms of collective action. Hence, some approaches are not relevant to the present

⁵⁷ Let mention here that the task of assembling the corpus of literature is extensively relying on a fragment of Daniel Cefai's massive work, who has pulled together a comprehensive review of the theoretical contributions made on the question, among others, of SMOs. The reference in question is Cefai, D. (2007). *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on ? Les théories de l'action collective*. Paris, 2007 : Editions La Découverte, 727 pages. The book title could be translated as follows: "Why does one mobilize itself? Theories of collective action".

case. Thus, the theoretical framework laid down here is a free selection of the concepts that are likely to help the observer to read ICLEI as a SMO. A peculiar emphasis will be put on the collective action frames' approach⁵⁸.

There is no theoretical ambition as such here⁵⁹, rather, this theoretical framework will be used as an analytical toolbox – using sometimes approaches that contradict one each other – in order to illuminate ICLEI over time and get closer to answering our hypothesis. The approach has been organized into six subsets of analytical tools as follows: the structure as a means (I); SMOs as incubators and generators of collective action and identities (II); SMOs as the product of contingencies, models, and consubstantial trends (III); SMOs as irrational and plural entities (IV); SMOs at the intersection of intra and inter-organizational arenas (V); SMOs and collective action frames (VI).

Section I : A Permanent Structure, an Inevitable Means to Sustain the Movement

From a sociological point of view SMOs are at the center of collective action's analysis. Indeed, as a rational form of collective action, the social movements, if they want to last, to be efficient or to appear as legitimate, have to provide themselves with organizational structures. This encompasses the need to give to the movement an administrative form with a managerial direction to rationalize the way the movement is organizing its existence. It is a condition to the mobilization of resources without which, sustaining activities over time is not possible, or extremely uncertain⁶⁰. Only a permanent structure can ensure that 'rational' and consistent strategies are set up and kept up to date. An organization is also a prerequisite to reducing uncertainties in the interaction with allies and competitors: signing memorandum of understanding, contracts, or building alliances are different means to reduce these uncertainties that emerge while collaborating and/or competing with other organizations, or even members.

⁵⁸ Benford and Snow (2000), op. cit.

⁵⁹ Even less that this paper was written in a very short period of time. The only theoretical ambition may be that of applying the SMOs' approach to ICLEI, which is not usually defined as a social movement's organization.

⁶⁰ Crozier, M. (1963). *Le Phénomène bureaucratique*. Paris : Le Seuil, 1963.

In addition, a movement is often a collection of isolated actors (individuals or organizations) with limited economic and relational resources, limited access to political institutions or mass media⁶¹. Thus, the existence of an active core of members, generally better sustained and therefore more professionalized, helps members of the movement in inserting them in universes where they can represent, situate themselves. Beyond the access to expertise services and communication channels, they can mobilize frames of claims that are understood by specific publics⁶² so their message is matching the grammar of specific areas. Concretely, it might be difficult for a small town to articulate the impact of its local and specific activities with the grammar of the international environmental negotiations.

In the same line, the mobilization of resources' model takes into account the parameters of groups' size and organization, their capacity to initiate strategic action, and the power of motivation contained in identities. To this extent, SMOs are crucial as they guarantee some efficiency and profitability of the collective action: SMOs are giving a body to an identity; they are able to collect the outcome of a strategic action. Doing so, they tend to 'mimic' private companies or state agencies when they compete or complement with them in providing private goods or public services. While registering a corporate name or applying for a project grant, they align their actions to existing rules and procedures that are not necessarily the ones of their main domain of action.

Section II : Contingency, Models, Trends

I) The Weight of Economic, Institutional, and Political Contingent Environments

For sure one of the most obvious ways to understand an organization, and even more a SMO, is to look at its economic, institutional, and political constraints and opportunities, to study its environment. It constrains the action and is at the same time the reserve of its future members and financial resources.

⁶¹ Molotch, H. (1979). Media and Movements, in J.D. McCarthy, M.N. Zald (dir.), *The Dynamics of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Winthrop, 1979, p.71-93.

⁶² Turner, R. (1969). The Public Perception of Protest. *American Sociological Review*, 1969, 34, 6, p. 815-831.

The contingency theory⁶³ and the model of resources' dependency are both insisting on the fact that the strategic rationality of the organization's decisions and conduct might be challenged by the availability of resources, the coincidence of an event, or asymmetrical exchanges with other organizations. Any staff in a non-profit organization, any ICLEI employee knows that action is always conditioned to the availability of funding that are linked to projects which objectives are defined by funders. As obvious this might be, it should not be forgotten while analyzing our case.

II) Cultural Models and Normative Environment

Neo-institutionalism is encouraging the analyst to look less at the performances of an organization and more at how much it fits to existing normative and cultural models⁶⁴. Doing so, one can evaluate the legitimacy of an organization and its movement. This approach gives a peculiar emphasis to the moments of emergence, to the genesis of the SMO as it emerges from a given normative context. Can one see a relationship with the evolution of the international normative context of the year 1990 and the emergence of ICLEI? Usually, the social movement finds its roots in an ideological antagonism with an existing situation, framed as unfair or undesirable. Again, the history of ICLEI is making this approach relevant and looking at its genesis will be a necessary step.

Conversely, when the perspective is reversed, when one does not look anymore at how the movement is fitting to a normative environment, but rather how the collective has used cultural models⁶⁵ and patterns to form its organization, it appears that most of the SMOs are the result of the recycling of old structuring patterns. This rejuvenating of patterns is determined by a need of ideological consistency; thus the organizational form is transferred from one context to another. This transfer does not abolish the necessary questioning about the name to give to the SMO; by naming the new entity, the collective is positioning itself in

⁶³ Lawrence, P.R., Lorsch, J. (1967). *Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration*. Boston: Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967.

⁶⁴ Meyer, J.W., Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 1977, 83, 48, P?147-160.

⁶⁵ Dobbin, F. (1994). Cultural Models of Organization: The Social Construction of Rational Organizing Principles, in D. Crane (Dir), *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*. Oxford: Balckwell, 1994, p.117-141.

an arena of organizations and actors. This is to say that a political project emerges from the micro choice of giving a name.

Like any organization and maybe even more, SMOs transform themselves according to a changing normative and cultural context, “they fold not to crack”⁶⁶. In the medium and long-term SMOs develop processes of adjustment, and sometimes change their name revising at the same time their political project.

However, adjustments do not only occur at the *meso* level of the organization, but also internally, at a *micro* level. Indeed, over time, the SMO proceeds more or less consciously to a great variety of arrangements in order to acclimatize to the environment or to adapt to internal trends and conflicts. The description of the environment includes economic, institutional, political conditions through the various territorial scales of the organization. But not only: the adjustments made by the collective action are also linked to values, cultural norms. So the collective action is embedded into local orders that include both physical and abstract parameters. Saying so is not adopting a ‘culturalist’ approach, rather, it stresses the analytical dimension opened when one takes into account the interpretative schemes mobilized by the managers and the members when they address an issue, project an action, answer to a new situation⁶⁷. It breaks off the idea of an organization automatically adjusting to the environment. Conversely, the SMO is accommodating to and assimilating a context of meanings, sense and interpretations; one can talk about a cultural ecology⁶⁸.

While the organization is the result of a number of organizational choices, including routines that are deliberate or more unconscious, the SMO is in addition embodying a cultural or normative project that gives sense to its rational strategies. This project, rooted in the genesis of the movement, never stops transforming. It will then be crucial to study the genesis of ICLEI’s movement.

⁶⁶ Page 347, Cefai, D. (2007), op cit. (Translated from French).

⁶⁷ Burke, Schütz and Garfinkel, (1965). The Concept of Organization. *Social Research*, 1965, 32, P. 239-255.

⁶⁸ This approach will be overcome in the section dedicated to collective action frames as it offers a more robust concept to analyze the notion of interpretive schemes, collective meanings, etc.

Section III : SMOs as Incubators and Generators of Collective Action

Nevertheless, the understanding of an organization of a social movement should not only be reduced to a *tool* used by a collective to take action: the social movements' organizations are part of the collective action, they multiply the power of their members, stimulate their intelligence and imagination in organizing them in networks of information where collective conception and projection happen. Common projects are imagined and designed through these networks of information and interaction, and implemented through the same channels. This is where the collective action and its constant renewal take their roots. From this perspective, collective action is not the result of a decision made by a top executive or some headquarters, but rather the outcome of the interactions between its parties within the organization, within the SMO. This is what is meant when one says that SMOs are incubators or generators of collective action⁶⁹.

Though, generating collective action also requires generating identities around which individual actors can aggregate. Indeed, organizations are crucial in giving a public representation to the movement, in making it visible; in defining and branding recognizable goals and claims, the SMOs are forming identities, interests and opinions in an order of institutionalized policy⁷⁰. For Cefaï, SMOs are “poles of symbolic identification”⁷¹, and this includes sometimes the personification of their leaders. Concerning our analysis of ICLEI, this order is the global arena of environmental governance, and more specifically its climate sub-arena. In addition, looking at the way an organization is electing its representatives can help to understand how the action group is organizing participation and representation inside the group, and how the collective is shaping the external form of the organization, the representative being the visible part of the iceberg.

⁶⁹ Starbuck, W.H. (1983). Organizations as Action Generators. *American Sociological Review*, 1983, 48, p.91-102.

⁷⁰ Gamson, William A. (1990). *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1990 (2nd Ed.).

⁷¹ P.342. Cefaï

Section IV : SMOs as Irrational and Plural Entities

One of the main contributions of the organizational literature to the study of organizations and more broadly to the study of decision is doubtlessly the notion of irrationality of actors. The model of bounded rationality has been developed by Herbert Simon⁷² and brilliantly used by Graham T. Allison in his analysis of the Cuban Missiles Crisis⁷³. Challenging the rationality of actors has radically changed and enriched the understanding of the strategic decision. Thus, approaches like the “Garbage can model”⁷⁴ have been built: the final decision of an organization is the result of a sequential and situated (irrational) process, where the solution chosen is the last solution to have been dismissed. The choice is the result of the subjective evaluation of the utility, its practical feasibility, and of a deliberative process. The influence of the multiple constraints mentioned in Section III, combined with the bounded rationality of actors calls for an understanding of the SMO as instable products of actions embedded into (a) local order(s). They are arenas of exchange and conflict, coordination and competition.

This approach is sapping the conception of an organization as a coherent actor. Indeed, a SMO is always the combination of a plurality of actors with their own bounded rationality, their specific frames. As a result, the members of the SMO are pulled by two contradictory forces: a central and centrifugal logic, emanating from the headquarters, which tries to integrate the various segments into one strategic vision; a peripheral and centripetal logic, where regional groups of members follow their own vision. Cefai describes this face of the SMO as an “intra-organizational arena”⁷⁵: the organization is pulling together a plurality of (bounded) rationalities and logics of legitimization. A quick look at the structure of ICLEI

⁷² March, J.G., Simon H. A. (1969). *Les Organisations*. Paris: Dunod, 1969.

⁷³ Allison G. T. (1971). *The Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missiles Crisis*. Boston: Little Brown, 1971.

⁷⁴ Cohen, M., March, J., Olsen J. (1972). A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choices. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1972, 17, 1, p. 1-25.

⁷⁵ Cefai, D. op cit, page 360.

with a World Secretariat and thirteen other regional and national offices⁷⁶ might make this perspective particularly relevant.

Section V : From the Intra-organizational Arena to the Inter-organizational Arenas

These intra-organizational arenas are embedded into inter-organizational arenas peopled with associations, companies, and institutions. These arenas are connected by common focuses – climate change, urban sustainability or decentralization for example – generating cooperation and competition with other organizations, occasional allies, potential members, mass media, private firms, public agencies, international organizations, etc. A functional interdependence links the organizations that engage in process of bargaining and negotiation. ICLEI, like any organization, is constantly interacting with other organizations like UCLG, the UNEP, or the European Union, the power of negotiation varying very much from one situation to another. In these interactions, organizations sharing organizational cultures tend to mimic one another.

SMOs have been evolving in environments that become more and more blurry and difficult to read. Thus, as a result of a double-edged process that entails a destabilization of the classic conception of the Welfare state and its corollary the growing liberalization of the world economy, hybrid actors are emerging, making the distinction between public and private spheres more and more obsolete. The importance of public-private partnerships, for instance, in the new multilateral development paradigm, and the creation of hybrid entities it suggests especially concerning urban areas, illustrates this growing complexity that makes even more difficult the analysis of the nature of the actors and their interactions. As most of ICLEI's activities take place in urban areas the SMO and its members, the local governments, are for sure dealing with this kind of new actors, always difficult to read.

In this context, the need for public justification is particularly important to legitimate the organization and increase its attractiveness and its power in bargaining processes. This

⁷⁶ For a list of the various offices see <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=global-contact-us>

constant care for being perceived as legitimate is part of many strategic interactions organizations deploy thanks to the capacity of the actors to learn and anticipate, to think strategically and trick the others. Organizations also engage in strategies of power in trying to control zones of uncertainty, to impose items on the agenda, takeover the resources of the competitors, making new alliances, etc. Rhetorical strategies serve to idealize the action, to seduce allies, to convince the public thanks to powerful images and arguments. Inter-organizational arenas are showing the diversity of the interactions between organizations and the strategies they deploy to sustain their organizational interests and theirs movement's values. One way to understand how these images and arguments are crafted is to look at the framing processes through which they are generated.

Section VI : Collective Action Frames and SMOs

The concept of frames crafted by Erving Goffman in his seminal book *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*⁷⁷ has been extensively used by social scientists to show the importance of common interpretative frames in the behaviors of individuals and organizations⁷⁸. Snow and Bedford provide us with a powerful understanding of frames: “Certainly collective action frames are, in part, cognitive entities that aid interpretation and social action, but their essence, sociologically, resides in situated social interaction, that is in the interpretive discussions and debates that social movement actors engage in amongst each other and in the framing contests that occur between movement actors and other parties within the movement field of action, such as countermovements, adversaries, and even the media.”⁷⁹ “Social action” has to be understood as an action that is taken in interaction with others, as the product of the interaction. This sense of collective action frames insists on the permanent (re)generation of shared meanings that occur among

⁷⁷ Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper, 1974.

⁷⁸ Cefai criticizes this understanding of Goffman's contribution as it reduces frames to “tools disconnected from their sites of action and interaction”, in Cefai, (2007), op cit., page 556, which is contradicted by Snow and Benford writings. Cefai's approach of Goffman's frames is meant to serve a micro-sociology of the collective action, looking in particular at “plays”, “dramas”, “rituals”. To this extent, this view reaches out of our scope in this paper and we will rely on a more common understanding of collective frames such as Snow and Benford's.

⁷⁹ Benford, R.D. and D.A. Snow, (date unknown), *Clarifying the Relationship between Framing and Ideology in the Study of Social Movements: A Comment on Oliver and Johnston*, accessible at http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/PROTESTS/ArticleCopies/SNOW_BED.PDF

the parts of a movement. As such, the social movement organization is a facilitator, the place where social interaction happens, a catalyst, and its parties are “signifying agents” actively engaged in the production of meaning.

Hence, frame analysis encompasses the intra-organizational arena as well as the inter-organizational arena as it recognizes the existence of the participation of “other parties” like “countermovements” in the “framing contests”. Then collective frames are not impermeable to the outside world, they are not only tools deployed by social movements but evolving and permeable cognitive entities. This relation is two-way, if frames are permeable to the outside; they are also challenging the outside frames. Thus, when the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities’ (LGMA) constituency⁸⁰ is intervening during a plenary session of a negotiation working group of the UNFCCC, LGs are clearly trying to influence other actors’ frames of action through rhetoric pitches. But the specific representative is also engaged in a framing contest with the other LGs’ actors, no organization or group of actor is unitary.

Looking at collective frames allows to understanding both, *how* movement’s actors build *what* common identities and *what* discourse overtime, and *how* the movement advocates *what* interests before other actors, in the outside world. At the end of the day, for Benford and Snow, generation of frames, the framing processes, “have come to be regarded, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes, as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements.”⁸¹ In the development of this paper, to better understand the richness of every situation, we will from time to time introduce

⁸⁰ Nine constituencies and their focal points are recognized by the UNFCCC secretariat, they are often allowed by the parties to make two minutes’ statements in plenary sessions of the negotiation groups. ICLEI is the focal of the LGMA constituency; A list of the nine constituencies is available at http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/ngo/application/pdf/const_continfo.pdf.

⁸¹ Benford, Robert D.; Snow, David A. Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000, Vol. 26 Issue 1, p.611-639, page 611. “Framing” is then defined page 614: “[Framing] denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as ‘collective action frames’.”

additional concepts related to Snow and Bedford's approach of frames, and also sometimes go back to Goffman's understanding of frames.

This rather broad and multidisciplinary analytical corpus laid down here should allow the reader to capture overtime the complexity of ICLEI's organization and social movement; to illuminate the process that led to what ICLEI is in 2010, to what it is doing, and above all, to what it is saying.

Part II. The Emergence of ICLEI as a Technical Agency

The first decade of ICLEI's existence has been almost entirely defined by two emblematic programs: the Cities for Climate Protection campaign (CCP) and the Local Agenda 21 (LA21). The general logic of the two initiatives has been crafted during the very first days of the social movement organization, during its founding congress where a well tested method and rationale has been applied.

This Part II intends to show to the reader what determined the emergence of ICLEI: Upstream, what has been the prelude to the birth of the first local government network focusing on one particular topic (Chapters 1 and 2), and, downstream, how its two emblematic programs have shaped its organizational structure, its movement identity, its narrative (Chapters 3 and 4).

Chapter 1. The Prehistory of ICLEI: a Brief Panorama of Local Governments' Associations

Founded in 1990, ICLEI is certainly not the first 'international' association of local governments to have emerged. Indeed, as early as 1913, the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) was established in the Netherlands with the intention to promote democratic local self-government and cross-cultural exchanges between municipalities around the world in the spirit of developing mutual benefits⁸². It seems to have started around a focus on newly founded cities, being active in linking old European cities to burgeoning municipalities of the post-colonial era. For many years, it focused on deepening exchanges and relationships between urban centers of industrialized countries and their counterparts in developing countries, integrating the value of world solidarity deep in the identity of the movement.

Followed in 1957 by the creation of the World Federation of United Towns and Cities (UTO), and in 1985 with the birth of the World Association of Major Metropolises (Metropolis), the size, number and scope of actions of transnational local governments' networks has increased steadily over the years, pushed and supported by the emergence of numerous national and regional networks. The multiplication of LGs' associations, in particular at the global level led to a state of competition between these various networks all striving to develop their membership and to gain international recognition, particularly in the UN system, and the resources that can result from it. In 2004, IULA, UTO, and Metropolis unified to form the joint organization United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) now based in Barcelona⁸³.

⁸² Source: <http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/resources/organizations/iula.html>

⁸³ The information available on the internet about the history and development of these organizations is scarce and dispersed. The website of UCLG www.cities-localgovernments.org, is surprisingly mute about the organizations that preceded its existence and the process that allowed to unify them under a common roof. www.Metropolis.org is not much more helpful beyond the possibility to access to publications up to 2002. To find a history of UCLG, one should visit UCLG's Middle East and West Asia Section at http://www.uclg-mewa.org/en/general_info.htm. Should the observer only see in this lack of information on UCLG global website only the consequence of a lack of capacity or the sign that this history is still too sensitive to be told, that no common official discourse has been agreed...?

This unification is the result of a long and difficult process that officially started in Istanbul, in 1996, during the UN-Habitat II conference⁸⁴. Most of these organizations were European based – and still are – and were therefore interacting and often conflicting on a permanent basis. At that time Konrad Otto-Zimmermann was the Executive Director for ICLEI-Europe, he reflects this climate of competition and its consequences in a limpid way:

“I was witnessing during the last 15 years or even more the whole tragedy and difficulty around the building of UCLG. Because it was an effort from cities where the Mayors said ‘it’s crazy, why are we members in UTO and members in IULA, and they fight each other? It’s our organizations, so why do we create member organizations that then don’t work together. It’s crazy! Why don’t we create just one organization that shows this is us?’ ”

From the perspective of their members, this lack of cooperation could not be understood and was in complete contradiction with their mandate to expressly generate cooperation among local authorities around the world. Indeed, while only looking at the mission it is not easy to understand why these organizations were not working hands in hands, or even why there was more than one single organization. However, looking backwards through the lens of a linear logic is often misleading in interpreting erratic processes. The very fact that UTO was ‘born’ in the Soviet bloc can explain the competition with the ‘capitalist’ IULA. Eventually, any new “market” experiences a phase when the number of organizations is increasing before the limited size of this market forces a movement of integration, leading to merges and fusions. To explain the incomprehension of this virtual Mayor in front of the weak organizational cooperation, one can think of a tendency of any organization or institution to bureaucratize and start living for itself, pursuing its own interests of survival and expansion over the promotion of the concerns of the members it is supposed to represent.

IULA, UTO and now UCLG are all generalist networks, unlike ICLEI which focuses on “environmental initiatives”. Their main focus has been the promotion of local autonomy through the concept of decentralization of decision-making power to the lower scales of government. While IULA has had a focus on trans-sector topics like the involvement of women in local decision-making, and local government representation in the areas of lasting development and town-planning; UTO had developed single-issue networks on the

⁸⁴ Source: http://www.uclg-mewa.org/en/general_info.htm

environment or social inclusion. Today, UCLG counts a large number of commissions (13) that organizes discussion among its members on specific topics such as Gender Equality, Decentralized Cooperation, or Decentralization and Self Local Government. UCLG seems to have only two programs running with loose operations. Supposedly being part of the historic unification, Metropolis is still an independent and separate organization according to its statutes⁸⁵. It also runs commissions (6) around topics specific to metropolis urban areas and delivers technical assistance and training on an ad hoc basis to its active members.

This panorama shows one thing in particular: before 1990 and ICLEI's foundation, there was no LGs' global network actually running global programs, the main activity was focusing around discussions in commissions and congresses, but no operations as such were undertaken. We can assume that the generalist character of the organization and their focus on the idea of representing the interests of LGs at the international level took precedence. This leads us to the second thing we can notice: at that time local governments' networks had not identified environmental issues as an important field of action. At the same time, at the end of the 1980s, the topic of transboundary environmental issues was rising⁸⁶. The process that led to the Rio Earth Summit had started, the Brundtland report was published in 1987 and overall environmental protection was definitely making its way up on the international⁸⁷ agenda. A vacant space was then left unoccupied; there was room for an ICLEI.

⁸⁵ Statutes are accessible at <http://metropolis.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Estatutos%20Metropolis%20EN.pdf>, viewed 6 September 2010.

⁸⁶ Already in the 1970s transboundary environmental issues had emerged. Thus, in the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972, the principles 21 and 22 already mention the need to address the environmental issues that affect people "beyond national jurisdictions". However, with Chernobyl in 1986, the problem is climbing on the international agenda. Declaration viewed 6 September 2010, <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1503&l=en>.

⁸⁷ The adjective "international" is used on purpose as it seems to us difficult to talk about a "global agenda" during a period still shaped by a strong bi-polarism. Indeed, at the time the term "global" was not used as our interview with Konrad Otto-Zimmermann confirmed.

Chapter 2. The Genesis of ICLEI, the Original Myth

Looking at the genesis⁸⁸ of a social movement's organization is always of great interest when one tries to understand what analytical referential was driving the founders while initiating the movement and what are the elements that constitute the organizational "myth" surrounding the story of the emergence and creation. This is a compulsory stage to be able to characterize what are the foundations of the organizational discourse, to capture the collective action frame of ICLEI.

Two moments obviously constitute this genesis as they are mentioned all the time⁸⁹ by actors when they tell the story of ICLEI: the episode of Irvine and the founding congress of ICLEI. One less apparent element is the historic background of the late 1980s that has played a crucial role in the emergence of many contemporary NGOs and social movements.

I) The Late 1980s: Is History Ending?

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

This quote is drawn from Fukuyama's famous essay *The End of History?*⁹⁰; the strong echo it received is a testimony of this spirit that was shared by the world leaders and public opinions at the time. The end of wars through the diffusion of democracy as a major factor of peace would allow the dream of universal development to come true. Of course, everything did not happen like this; shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Battle of Mogadishu is a brutal halt to the dream of a world where a powerful UN would rule out wars; Eastern African islamists gave a 'fresh' new start to history.

⁸⁸ According to Cefai, "Neoinstitutionalism is haunted by the question of genesis of SMOs, by the moments of emergence and crystallization". Cefai, D. Op cit, page 338.

⁸⁹ Be they Otto-Zimmermann or Brugmann, the founding individuals, or the ICLEI webpage under "history".

⁹⁰ Fukuyama, Francis (1989) 'The end of history?', *TheNational Interest* 16, Summer 1989. The thesis was then developed in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).

And yet one should not underestimate the importance of the idea that the world was becoming ‘just’ and that multilateralism based on the respect of human rights was likely to become the new way to solve global problems. Similarly to Wilson’s idealism that followed the First World War, the beginning of the 1990s was characterized by a new collective optimism sparked by the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin wall, and a new momentum for international cooperation. The 1990s were starting with the implosion of the last totalitarian regimes. In this context, the transnational civil society experienced a dramatic development and the number of non-governmental NGOs registered as observers before the ECOSOC has dramatically increased. A fresh wind was blowing.

When Jeb Brugmann is asked about how the idea to create ICLEI came about, he mentions the well-known story of Irvine (II), but also goes back to the Reagan era.

Under the slogan “America is Back”, the Reagan administration had relaunched military and political interventionism, in particular in Central America. The *Realpolitik* also led the US to backing the Apartheid regime in South-Africa as a guarantee against Soviet influence. Domestically, the cost implied by this new radicalization of US foreign policy raised political opposition, in particular from the subnational and local levels of governments⁹¹. In 1983, Jeb Brugmann was “*appointed as the first Municipal Peace Commissioner in the US*”⁹² by the Mayor of Cambridge, MA and backed by the progressive think tank the Centre for Innovative Diplomacy⁹³. His mission was to setup a network of US local leaders, the *Local Elected Officials for Social Responsibility* network⁹⁴, in order to gather political and financial resources to organize a political response to the Neo-conservative foreign policy agenda. The movement targeted in particular the immigration policy that was sending Apartheid refugees back to their country. The resources mobilized

⁹¹ Brugmann mentions that the military effort engaged by the Reagan administration had led to reallocate tax incomes – that had been directed to the local governments during the 1960s, 1970s to help them to support a tremendous urban growth – towards new “foreign adventures”.

⁹² Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010.

⁹³ Directed by Larry Agran.

⁹⁴ Brugmann mentions as a model the Physicians for Social Responsibility who were promoting nuclear disarmament. A network that later organized into the International Physicians for Social Responsibility and was later awarded a Peace Nobel Prize. This initiative has apparently been one of the models that inspired ICLEI founder to create a network of local leaders at the international level.

(\$200 million USD) helped to build a political momentum that led some states to oppose the Federal immigration practice and an escalating pressure on the Federal policy. From this episode emerged a political method that, a few years later, would be used again in Irvine.

In parallel, since 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US had imposed a moratorium on city-to-city relationships with the Soviet bloc. Once again, as a way to counter the Federal warmongering foreign policy, Jeb Brugmann was also commissioned by the city of Cambridge to get into contact with cities from the satellite republics of the Soviet Union in order to explore their will to develop direct twinning to promote cultural exchanges. Jeb reports with a certain irony that this initiative was used by Reagan in a meeting with Gorbachev in 1985 in Geneva as the only consensual point to agree on. Thus, the same year, the city of Cambridge was initiating the first twin city partnership, since 1979, with the capital of Armenia, Yerevan. Beyond the controversy that was animating the constitutionalists at the time about the right for a local government to engage in foreign policy, particularly in the context of the Cold War, a city had actually engaged into a pragmatic initiative that would set a precedent; a precedent in the growing awareness that urban centers were interacting in many ways regardless of national borders. As Brugmann says today “cities were dealing with globalization while the word was not yet there”⁹⁵. This was the mindset of people like the ICLEI founder and his employer at the time Larry Agran, Director of the Centre for Innovative Diplomacy and Mayor of Irvine, CA.

With the end of the Cold War, like many nuclear disarmament and pacifist activists, Jeb Brugmann came back to his first passion, environmental problems. In 1988 – a year after the publication of the Brundtland report on Sustainable Development, as he was witnessing the first signs of the Soviet bankruptcy and collapse through the city partnership with Yerevan, he could see the end of the Cold War coming; which, one year later, the fall of the Berlin Wall will confirm. Then, he started to look again at the environmental science where new transboundary problems like the destruction of the ozone layer and climate change were emerging. It is against this background that the Irvine story started.

⁹⁵ Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010. He developed further this idea into the concept of a “city system” in his book *Welcome to the Urban Revolution: How Cities are Changing the World* (2009).

II) The Tale of Irvine: Cities Can Help Solving Global Environmental Problems

In any tale there are elements of truth and elements of exaggeration. What matters is not so much to know if the tale is true or not, but rather the rationale it communicates to the people who hear/read it. The role of Irvine, California, in the shift of United States' position concerning the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, a key step towards the international phasing-out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), is by many accounts a tale. A fairy tale that will condense ICLEI rationale for many years.

Once upon a time in the small university city of Irvine⁹⁶, California, a few companies were responsible for 1/800th of the world emissions of CFC-113, a major ozone-depleting compound⁹⁷. One can understand the strange feeling Larry Agran had when he discovered that his beloved city was partly responsible for a major transboundary environmental issue that was mobilizing scientists⁹⁸ and environmentalists around the world, and even some nation-states were getting involved. While many of the students and scientists of Irvine's campus were mobilizing to put pressure on the US government who was still refusing to sign an international protocol to the Vienna Convention to phase-out CFCs – the only way to avoid the destruction of the precious ozone layer that protects humans and animals against harmful UV rays – will a committed Mayor do nothing but shout in the desert? This was certainly not the case of Larry Agran.

Thus, in 1989, the city council of Irvine, backed by a well-informed local opinion, passed “the first North-American law requiring a phase out of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) compounds”⁹⁹. But then, what else can a Mayor do?

Behind Larry Agran's action was one person, Jeb Brugmann, his employee. It was he who proposed to Irvine's Mayor to try using the same method that had produced some

⁹⁶ 105,000 inhabitants at the time, according to Brugmann's book.

⁹⁷ The story relies very much on Jeb Brugmann's book, *Welcome to the Urban Revolution: How Cities are Changing the World*, (page 6), on the interview we made for that purpose, and to some extent on Konrad Otto-Zimmermann's interview.

⁹⁸ The first scientists to have showed the role of CFCs in ozone layer depletion were Sherwood Rowland and Mario Molina from University of California, Irvine...The have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, viewed 12 September 2010, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/1995/.

⁹⁹ Brugmann, J. Op cit.

success with US foreign policy. So from the beginning the idea was not only to pass local laws against CFCs but to encourage other cities to do so as well. Thus, soon after the council decision was passed, the ambitious¹⁰⁰ Mayor convened a meeting of city leaders to urge them to pass similar laws. Moved by the effort, and the top-notch scientific briefing by the famous scientist Sherwood Rowland, around thirty cities followed Irvine's example in the rest of the US and in Canada. Within a few months, states passed similar laws and legend has it that these local and subnational initiatives played a major role in the shift of the US international position on the total phase-out of CFCs leading to the Clean Air Act Amendment in 1990¹⁰¹.

Thus, in a typical two-level game¹⁰², a handful of local authorities had managed to affect substantially a federal decision, leading to the effective implementation of the Vienna Convention as a solution to a transboundary environmental collective problem: "This was like an awakening of the consciousness that you can take on local initiatives that have a global impact"¹⁰³. The original myth was set. The fairytale was on its way.

Every fairytale mobilizes collective metaphors, cultural patterns, meta-stories. Indeed, the tale of one Mayor making the 'all-mighty' federal state – the superpower – changing its international position is definitely not culturally neutral. From David against Goliath to the Civil Rights movement, the stories of leaders that stood up and made the impossible come true have always been a powerful engine of mobilization, in particular in the US. However, Rosa Parks was not alone, and would have been an epiphenomena if other individuals would have not stood up and rose after her. The meta-story of the group of normal individuals who achieved the greatest things is universal. Who were then the Martin Luther King and Edgar Nixon¹⁰⁴ of Larry Agran-Parks? Sherwood Rowland brought his scientific legitimacy and the

¹⁰⁰ In 1992, Larry Agran unsuccessfully sought the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidential election.

¹⁰¹ By other accounts, the chemical company DuPont Nemours would have played a major role: the group has developed an alternative compound to CFCs and was intensively lobbying the US government and House of Representatives. Then, where is the truth? Maybe a little bit of everything. An article mentioning the shift of Du Pont's position in 1988: *The Washington Post*, March 25, 1988, Ban on CFCs Urged to Save Ozone Shield; DuPont, Top Maker, Asks Total Phaseout, viewed 7 September, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-1247369.html>.

¹⁰² Putnam, R.D. Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games. *International Organization*. 42(Summer 1988):427-460.

¹⁰³ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Edgar Nixon was the director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Montgomery, Alabama. He played an instrumental role in supporting King's action in the boycott of

young Brugmann was the one in the backstage, making sure the show would be a success. Of course, this episode never reached the level of mobilization of the Civil Rights movement, but the collective metaphors mobilized are very similar.

The morale of the tale, the rationale, is limpid: if united, local governments can play a key role in international politics on specific issues: something that the (generalist) existing local governments' associations had never really achieved.

III) The Founding Congress in the UN Headquarters

In September 1990, a global meeting of 200 local authorities was convened in the UN Headquarters in New York to discuss environmental issues and possible new ways of collaboration. While the patrons were the UNEP, the IULA, and the Centre for Innovative Diplomacy¹⁰⁵, in practice Jeb Brugmann “was the convener, the one who got the idea; he was pulling it all together”¹⁰⁶. Indeed, he reports that only two weeks after the Irvine meeting he received a phone call from Noel Brown, the UNEP director, who wanted to develop this kind of action internationally and was ready to support any smart initiative; the rationale had produced its effect. This is how the future ICLEI Secretary General managed to get the UN Headquarters as a venue and the funding to convene its congress.

In September, the conference took place, gathering city officials like the Head of Freiburg's Environmental Department, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann who describes this meeting as “*the first world congress where cities would come together and exchange experiences about environmental matters, policies and solutions at a global scale*”¹⁰⁷. As mentioned in the introduction, the participants realized they were all facing the same kind of challenges and that some cities were a step ahead in finding innovative solutions while others were still asking themselves what to do. Otto-Zimmermann mentions a topic in particular that was focusing attention: waste incineration. Indeed, at the time a vast number of cities were facing obstacles in building incinerators within their jurisdiction as local environmentalist and

Montgomery bus system, considered as the first large-scale collective action of the Civil Rights Movement.
Source: Wikipedia.

¹⁰⁵ The think-tank that was employing Jeb Brugmann at the time.

¹⁰⁶ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

NIMBY movements were starting to mobilize against those installations perceived as a major source of pollution. The fact that nuclear companies were investing in this booming sector reinforced the opposition in many places: “if these bad guys are now selling incinerators, there must be something around that”¹⁰⁸, they were saying. This example shows that local governments, or their environmental departments to be more accurate, realized that they were dealing with the same problems and even with the same global companies.

Furthermore, the conference was putting emphasis on transnational atmospheric problems. The story of Irvine and CFCs was of course a permanent background showing what can be achieved by cities acting in a coordinated manner. This means municipalities could not only share information and experiences, but also *weigh* on national and global environmental politics. This is a crucial detail in the history of ICLEI. As mentioned before, at the local government level, the service interacting with ICLEI is the environment department or its equivalents and as Otto-Zimmermann says casually “*It’s environmentalists in the environment Department*”. In parallel, the story of Larry Agran’s action on CFCs was growing, and individuals were saying “*If there were many Irvines around the world who take the same initiative, then we can improve the state of the world*”¹⁰⁹. And another atmospheric challenge was threatening the global environmental conditions: climate change. Indeed, during the conference James Hansen, one of the first climate scientists to ring the bell, was a keynote speaker. There, during the founding congress a number of cities started to discuss local climate action (Chapter 4).

This meeting was a moment when environmentalists who were also city officials built a common awareness of the fantastic opportunity to pool political resources to push beyond borders for a better world. A common good was identified: a better world in terms of environmental protection and even beyond. And enemies are burgeoning – “the bad guys” represented by the nuclear and oil industries – and they are already active at the *global* level. But new means of action were also emerging, as Jeb Brugmann stresses: “*during the very first months the CCP and the Local Agenda 21 were already there*”. The foundations of the social movement were laid down; the story of ICLEI could begin.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

In every fairytale, the charming prince and the princess are of course of prime importance, but one should not neglect the role played by the castle and its high dungeon¹¹⁰. Erving Goffman insisted on the importance of the dramaturgy of collective action, and particularly on the notion of stage where the action is performed. Through the metaphor of theatre, he stresses the need to take into account the role of the decorum in the construction of frames. The fact that the first world congress of cities about environmental issues takes place in the UN headquarters is not to be underestimated. Less than three months before the congress, the Berlin wall had fallen, the bipolarism that had been freezing the UN system was cracking; the collective myth of an international community that could work towards a better world was suddenly becoming more real and the United Nations would be the logical stage of this renewed international cooperation. So it is not only fancy to hold a congress in the UN Headquarters, but it is a highly symbolic place to do so. It carries meaning not only for the participants, but for the audience of the year 1990 and the years to come.

The discourse of ICLEI was framed: local governments can improve environmental conditions locally by exchanging information and supporting each other, but they can also use their political leadership transnationally towards a better world. And they should do it strategically, at the “right place”¹¹¹, where the world is decided – in 1990, this means in the UN. To the question “How?”, the answer was the only logical one: by founding an organization that can sustain the movement, increase the sharing of information, organize such congresses, liaise with the UN system and raise the necessary funds. From his experience with Irvine, Jeb Brugmann knew that nothing happens without a core of activists to “pull everything together”. He also knew that a successful outcome or congress does not guarantee a continued action as the experience with CFCs might have shown. So he, and a few collaborators, had prepared the concept of the organization before the congress¹¹². A draft constitution was prepared – a Charter that would change very little in the future. Then, while everything is there, including an inspiring text, the right actors, a large and dedicated

¹¹⁰ Is the Walt Disney logo, the world provider of contemporary fairy tales, not a castle with high towers?

¹¹¹ “The UNEP hosted the meeting in the United Nations headquarters. So it was staged immediately at the right place”, says Konrad Otto-Zimmermann.

¹¹² Konrad Otto-Zimmermann reports the fact that in his first phone call with Jeb Brugmann, they had already discussed the form such an organization would take, and the city of Freiburg was already offering to host its secretariat.

audience, and the perfect decorum, founding the organization would not only be automatic, it would be a moment of communion that they all remember, that would drive the collective representation and pull together the many parts of the movement for many years.

The genesis of ICLEI is characteristic of the emergence of a social movement's organization. The movement takes a concrete form when an organization is created around a name – the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives¹¹³, a constitution – the ICLEI Charter – and a core group that would implement the mandate given by the text. From a strict organizational perspective it is the legal birth of the movement and its organization; from a wider point of view though, the genesis is a story, a tale and its rationale with prime influence on the constitution of a common identity and a collective discourse among the local governments involved; the moment when dispersed actors named their collective effort. From the episode of Irvine to the founding congress in the UN Headquarters, a myth forged into the spirit of the early 1990s was formed. The method though was tested in the 1980s at a domestic level with the experience of the Local Elected Officials for Social Responsibility. According to Jeb Brugmann, this is why ICLEI was able to launch two major programs so rapidly; indeed both the Cities for Climate Protection campaign and the Local Agenda 21 were envisaged during the founding Congress and launched in the subsequent years to become the skeleton of ICLEI development for the first ten years of its existence.

¹¹³ According to Jeb Brugmann, the initiative was first described on the founding congress brochure as an international secretariat for local environmental initiatives: "This was not intended to become the name just to describe what we wanted to do". The word 'council' being preferred to describe a "deliberative body" whereas a 'secretariat' does not take decision. The story of this name will be addressed in further details in the pivotal chapter 5.

Chapter 3. Local Agenda 21, First Feat of Arms

The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 is a landmark of international environmental mobilization, in particular because the civil society was widely involved. The Agenda 21 is still today more popular than the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. One of the reasons is lying in its chapter 28 that encourages local authorities to define their own sustainability agenda for the twenty-first century. Less than twenty years later, the Local Agenda 21 has been implemented in more than 10,000 municipalities in the world¹¹⁴. While local authorities were not considered as a Major Group during the Stockholm Conference in 1972, in Rio they are mentioned in a dedicated chapter. How did this happen?

Looking at ICLEI brings some answers. Indeed, the expression “Local Agenda 21” was mentioned¹¹⁵ for the first time in 1990, in the report of ICLEI founding congress. How the concept did make its way from this document to the draft agreed on by 172 countries in 1992.

I) The Instrumental Role of ICLEI in the LA21 Drafting

In November 1990, soon after the founding congress took place, Jeb Brugmann sent a letter to Maurice Strong, the Chair of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) who was preparing the meetings in the lead-up to the Rio Earth Summit. In this letter, ICLEI SG was moving him to engage local governments in the process. Maurice Strong had a substantive record for being a strong supporter of the civil society engagement in the UN forums. He had been the one introducing the idea and pushing for the recognition of civil society Major Groups in Stockholm in 1972. Logically enough, then, Strong welcomed the initiative and received Jeb Brugmann in Geneva, in January 1991. Then, “In the meeting, Strong gave the “green light” to develop the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) idea and to work with his team to find a way to integrate it into the UNCED and the draft Agenda 21.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ According to ICLEI SG, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann.

¹¹⁵ ICLEI Founding Congress Report (1990). Brugmann mentions that he first thought to register the name as a trademark but he “*made the decision that it should be public domain, everyone had to feel the ownership of it.*”

¹¹⁶ Brugmann in Hom, L. (2002). The Making of Local Agenda 21: How local authorities got involved in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, An interview with Jeb Brugmann. *Local Environment* Vol 7 No 3 August 2002.

At the time local governments' associations like IULA and UTO were very much slowed down by the mutual competition and neither the one nor the other had developed expertise or interest in the area of sustainability. Therefore, ICLEI became the only LGs' network to actually participate in the Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) to convince the parties of the interest to see local authorities as a level of government that could support the process. It is thus ICLEI which provided Strong's team with the necessary input to start drafting what would become a few months later the chapter 28. Consequently, LGs' meetings have been organized in Toronto for instance or in Europe where the ICLEI European Secretariat convened a European LA21 consultation committee with representatives of cities from the West and the East. It is again ICLEI SG who introduced the concept of Local Agenda 21 during a briefing to heads of delegation who positively received the concept and endorsed it during the PrepCom of August 1991. Then, Brugmann remembers exchanging faxes back and forth with Joe Wheeler who was his main referent within UNCED's team. This is this draft that was then presented to the last PrepCom which did not change a word of it except that the mention to ICLEI was removed as the result of the pressure exerted by IULA and UTO who started to see an interest in the process¹¹⁷.

Jeb Brugmann reports today how unaware he and his colleagues were of the United Nations' way of working. This involvement during the preparation of the Rio Earth Summit was the moment when ICLEI acquired a precise knowledge of the internal procedures of the various UN bodies. ICLEI did not make the LA21 happen alone, Maurice Strong had open a large door with the concept of Major Group and as Brugmann says: *"ICLEI provided a practical, concise, adaptable concept of what local governments could do - LA21."*¹¹⁸

II) A Rigorous Methodology to Start the Implementation

In spite of its absence from the final phrasing of Chapter 28, ICLEI has played a central role in the development of a rigorous methodology to setting up Local Agenda 21. Indeed, the text provides only a direction and objectives to achieve; it is not a proper tool that can be used directly by local governments. ICLEI and its Secretary General were perfectly

¹¹⁷ This episode is documented in further details in Hom, L. (2002). Op cit.

¹¹⁸ Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010.

aware of this as they had developed the concept in collaboration with their members. It is thanks to a grant from the UNEP that ICLEI started a two-year action research project to set up the Local Agenda 21 methodology, the planning process. Jeb Brugmann says today that they wanted to bring rigor to the process, not just write a manual; the ambition was to develop an actual tool robust enough to be used in various contexts. Therefore, the research project called *LA 21 Model Communities Program* was launched in 1994 among fourteen selected ICLEI members from every continent.

Through this project, a particular emphasis was put on cities from developing countries. Jeb Brugmann saw the Local Agenda 21 as a means to engage the informal sector in the decision-making process in cities where slums were (and still are) expanding without control, aggravating existing problems linked to health and poverty. Thus, ICLEI has supported with success the city of Quito, Ecuador, in engaging *subterranean* actors. Nevertheless, for many years the Local Agenda 21 has been seen by many ‘developmentalists’ like the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) as a way to push a northern environmental agenda in southern countries. Jeb Brugmann remembers the fierce opposition the LA21 raised among some grass-root movements who saw in the initiative a top-down approach as it was stressing the role of governments, even if local. In November 1995, the cities involved in the project came together to share and review their experiences which led to the publication in 1996 of the Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide¹¹⁹. This document has shaped most of the LA21 initiatives from national and local associations, or consulting companies using it as the base of their approach.

While Local Agendas 21 started to burgeon on their own in many countries where national associations were created, ICLEI received the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and launched LA21 projects in developing countries. These projects were on a national (Brazil and Chile) or regional (Southern Africa) basis. It allowed the social movement organization to opening new ICLEI offices with project staff supporting municipalities in launching a LA21 planning process. When these projects came to

¹¹⁹ ICLEI, IDRC, (1996). *Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide, An Introduction to Sustainable Development Planning*. Co-published with the support of the UNEP. Viewed 12 September, <http://www.idrc.ca/openbooks/448-2/>.

an end these offices tried to find other sources of revenues and developed new activities in their regions¹²⁰. This is how ICLEI opened new offices in countries where the demand from local governments was not particularly important. Conversely, ICLEI had rapidly expanded in Europe, Japan and USA as the members were pushing to get a supporting staff¹²¹. The LA21 has thus been an axis of ICLEI's development, allowing the SMO to take root in new geographical spaces supporting its membership expansion. The LA21 being centered on the notion of participation to the local decision-making process taking the form of stakeholder involvement, it also gave a material existence to one of the core values of ICLEI as a movement of environmentalists.

III) From the Early Successes to the Slow Down

The Chapter 28 had set very ambitious targets – as not legally binding – to its implementation: “By 1996, most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their populations and achieved a consensus on "a local Agenda 21" for the community.”¹²² Of course such an ambition could not be satisfied. But Rio and its Agenda 21, in particular the Section III dedicated to the role of Major Groups had given a fresh start to the involvement of the civil society and other levels of government in the way to address global environmental change. Following the spirit of Rio, local authorities were seating at the Conference Habitat II in Istanbul in 1996 with a status similar to the Vatican, allowing them to take part to the negotiation as other parties. There, while the Local Agenda 21 had been present in the first draft, it quickly disappeared in the negotiating text issued by the Secretariat. As a party, local authorities would many times ask to reintegrate the LA21 in the text without success; as Jeb Brugmann says today, “it was a dangerous precedent”¹²³ for some nation-states. Since this parenthesis in history, the status of local authorities' association

¹²⁰ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹²¹ This is because of a strong pressure from its members in Taiwan that ICLEI has recently launched a call to for cities to host the future “Chinese Taipei” office. We wonder how ICLEI will call this office, as it cannot be called a “national office” as it would jeopardize any chance to open an office in continental China.

¹²² Agenda 21, Chapter 28, viewed 12 September 2010, http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/res_agenda21_28.shtml.

¹²³ Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010. Confirmation of this episode could not be found after a humble web search.

never really improved in the UN system¹²⁴, still being considered as observer organizations, and most of the time even as a non-governmental ones as it is the case with the UNFCCC. For Jeb Brugmann, this is the moment when he understood that the UN system will never really back the Local Agenda 21 endeavor. Indeed, LA21 initiatives have not received a proper support from UN agencies beyond the first push in the right direction. Thus, if today ICLEI is estimating to 10,000 local governments that have defined their LA21, it has been thanks to bilateral support and not from the UN.

In 2002, during the Johannesburg Summit, ICLEI and its new Secretary General launched the Local Action 21 as the next step ten years after Rio and the Local Agenda 21. Local Action 21's goal was to encourage LGs who had engaged in a local agenda making to start implementing it. From the reading of the article wrote by Konrad Otto-Zimmermann at the time¹²⁵, one can feel the frustrated ambition generated by the Local Agenda 21 movement: "Local Action 21 is a *mandate* to local authorities worldwide to move from agenda to action and ensure an accelerated implementation of sustainable development."¹²⁶ A need to move from ambition to realization. This new call can also be seen as an additional claim from local authorities and their networks to get more attention from the international community; an attention synonym of financial resources at a time when many of the projects financed through bilateral project grants were coming to an end. But neither Johannesburg Plan of Implementation nor Local Action 21 will reach the popularity of their ancestors and, in 2010, Local Action 21 seems to have slowly disappeared of ICLEI's main discourse¹²⁷.

LA21 has stirred up a large number of academic articles analyzing its various dimensions, from the normative and theoretical discussions around the tension, for instance,

¹²⁴ "UN-HABITAT also tried to promote the direct participation of local authorities in the work of its Governing Council. In 1997, a proposal was made to include representatives of international associations of local authorities in the Commission, based on the tripartite ILO model involving governments, employers and trade unions." The attempt is reported to have not succeeded. Viewed 12 September 2010, <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=365&cid=386>.

¹²⁵ Otto-Zimmermann, K. (2002). Local Action 21, Motto – Mandate – Movement, in the Post-Johannesburg Decade. *Local Environment*, Volume 7, Issue 4 November 2002, pages 465 – 469.

¹²⁶ Otto-Zimmermann, K. (2002). Op cit, page 465.

¹²⁷ Today, ICLEI is using the terminology Sustainable Communities and Cities built around four initiatives: Resilient Communities and Cities, Just and Peaceful Communities, Viable Local Economies, and Eco-efficient Cities. Viewed 12 September, <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=801>.

between environmental and social themes, or to the way it has been implemented in various locations (North and South). The purpose here has not been to make a review of the literature about Local Agenda 21 – that seems not to have been done so far – but rather to try to understand the LA21 movement’s general signification for the topic of global sustainability. One article has drawn our attention as it has been written by the man who has largely participated to make the concept emerging. In “Locating the 'Local Agenda': Preserving Public Interest in the Evolving Urban World”¹²⁸, Jeb Brugmann acknowledges the “practical merit” of the approach, which has led in many municipalities to a strong local government’s interventionism serving the implementation of a locally defined development agenda. However, he writes, “the LA21 vision and movement often competes with the neoliberal development project for the commitment of local authorities, and the latter has exponentially greater resources and institutional means to localize its agenda than the LA21 movement ever had to globalize its own.”¹²⁹ Indeed, the local agenda had been loosely defined, and LA21 was more “an ethos” than a true agenda.

The significance of the Local Agenda 21 for ICLEI is high. In the lead-up to the 1992 Earth Summit, ICLEI has acquired a thorough knowledge of the UN system and increased its recognition among its different bodies. Nevertheless, the opposition of some states to a greater participation of local authorities in this system has considerably slowed down the development of a true local agenda. But has ICLEI really tried to develop such an agenda? The discourse of the organization has very often been made from a technical bias, slightly uncoupled from the more normative debate. The emphasis has been put on developing methods based on rigorous scientific programs that allowed the organization to attract funding from bilateral donors, sustaining therefore its organizational and movement development. This first feat of arms has demonstrated a strong capacity to act behind the scenes and shape new instruments for local authorities’ sustainable management, but it also showed the

¹²⁸ Brugmann, J. Locating the 'Local Agenda': Preserving Public Interest in the Evolving Urban World. In Marcotullio, P. and Gordon McGranahan (Eds). *Scaling Urban Governance: from Local to Global and Back*. London: Earthscan, 2007, 366 pages.

¹²⁹ Brugman, J. (2007). Op cit, page 350.

limitations of ICLEI in terms of engaging into normative contests at the global level; an idea that is both confirmed and contested by the CCP campaign.

Chapter 4. The CCP Campaign: Birth, Acme, Evolution

Similarly to the Local Agenda 21 movement, the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign was imagined during the first week of existence of ICLEI and became a major achievement of the social movement organization that has significantly shaped the organizational structure.

If the CCP has been studied extensively by the literature – in particular in its US and Australian contexts – its organizational reality has – to our knowledge – never been addressed. Thus, while Betsill and Bulkeley emphasize the role of glue played by financial, political and discursive resources, they do not explain how this ‘glue’ is manufactured. How has ICLEI pulled the CCP campaign together?¹³⁰ Exploring this question may explain why the CCP campaign achieved so much – to the extent that some scholars emitted the idea that it could drive global climate action¹³¹ – and why it now appears globally on a rather low profile¹³².

I) The Early Birth of an Ambitious Program

Already after the success of Irvine on CFCs, in 1989, Jeb Brugmann was thinking about reproducing the method with climate change. Indeed, as he says now about climate, “the awareness was not there, but the science was”¹³³. During the founding congress, Brugmann had invited James Hansen¹³⁴ as a keynote speaker to brief the participants with the latest scientific knowledge about global warming and climate change. There, the future ICLEI SG would gather a number of city representatives particularly committed – a number of them

¹³⁰ My own experience as an ICLEI staff showed me the difficulty of achieving anything among local governments, nothing can happen without substantial efforts.

¹³¹ Kousky, C. And Schneider, SH. (2003). Global Climate Policy: Will Cities Lead the Way? *Climate Policy*, 2003, Volume 3, Issue 4, Pages 327-484.

¹³² Since the Global Report in 2006, no specific effort has been made (neither planned in the close future) by the World Secretariat to display the progresses of the campaign.

¹³³ Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010

¹³⁴ James Hansen presented to a US Congress Committee on 23 June 1988 his research results that were suggesting anthropogenic global warming contributing to raise the awareness, viewed 12 September 2010, http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/2008/TwentyYearsLater_20080623.pdf.

had already started actions to reduce their energy consumption – to explore what needed to be done before even thinking of taking action. The workshop decided that a proper research should study the way GHG emissions could be measured and reduced.

In 1990, while Jeb Brugmann was heading to the Washington DC to present his climate project to officials of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), he met the head of the Agency in the plane. Whatever they told each other, the fact is that a substantive funding was attributed very quickly to ICLEI to launch its project and start developing a methodology to measure urban GHG emissions including the development of the necessary software, and to explore the policy framework that could guide the actions to reduce the emissions. By summer 1991, the first funds came and allowed ICLEI SG to hire Phil Jessop to develop the project – he had previously worked for the city of Toronto which was the first municipality to set a reduction target of its GHG emissions (20%). Similarly, and before, the *LA 21 Model Communities Program*, ICLEI approached the project in a very rigorous way. The *Urban CO₂ Reduction Project* was launched in 1991 as an action-research study, involving, again, fourteen members of ICLEI among which were Copenhagen, Hanover, Saarbrücken, Toronto, Istanbul, etc. In 1993, the methodology was set and the Cities for Climate Protection campaign was launched during the first Municipal Leaders Summit on Climate Change, held in New York. The fact that this campaign was based on a scientific process was essential when one considers the fact that in 1993, not a single country in the world had quantified its national level of GHG emissions.

II) The Success of a Method

The outcomes of the *Urban CO₂ Reduction Project* have led Phil Jessop – CCP international coordinator at the time – to conceive a *Five Milestone Process*¹³⁵ as a method to hierarchize the various actions a city had to take in the definition of a climate strategy. The first milestone consists in making a baseline emissions inventory. The logic is that one cannot reduce its emissions if it does not know what they are, which sectors of its economy are emitting. The city would be therefore graduating from one milestone to the other in a

¹³⁵ The *Five Milestone Process* is detailed on ICLEI website, viewed 12 September 2010, <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=810>.

cumulative process of progress. Then, the four other milestones recommend to, successively, define emissions reductions targets, develop a local action plan, implement policies and measures, and eventually monitor the results. According to ICLEI website, “it is the breadth [and flexibility] of this program that enables it to cross north/south, developed/developing, metropolis/town boundaries and that has made it successful worldwide.”¹³⁶

Betsill and Bulkeley, however, stresses another element: “Rather than using the CCP program as a source of technical expertise, the program provides a source of inspiration, recognition, and legitimation for particular interpretations about the environmental responsibilities of local governments, and of the interconnections between different agendas. In this respect, the program has been a means through which norms about local climate protection have been negotiated, reiterated, and sustained”¹³⁷. The discursive dimension is emphasized. As mentioned in the introduction of this document, the CCP campaign helped local climate action promoters to reformulate existing local challenges such as energy consumption or air pollution as part of a global issue. One should go further in saying that ICLEI, through its campaign, has provided heads of environmental or energy department with a reframing of existing problems in a very *rational* way. Once again, it has to be stressed how the organization insisted in adopting a rigorous approach to legitimate its actions. Jeb Brugmann’s insistence on being “rigorous” has to be understood to illuminate one face of ICLEI.

As the two Secretaries General ICLEI ever had recall today, in 1990 ICLEI was a movement of environmentalists who were running newly created environmental departments. One also has to remember that in the early 1990s, environmentalists were still generally perceived as idealists or hippies, in particular at the local level where they could easily be associated with NIMBY movements. In a nutshell, they had to prove everything; that they were not dreamers and that their actions could effectively bring benefits to the community and its council. This challenging context for local climate action drove ICLEI’s supporting staff to frame the CCP discourse around the financial benefits energy efficiency measures could bring to the city. A discourse backed by a sound set of tools such as the HEAT software or the

¹³⁶ Viewed 12 September 2010, <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=810>.

¹³⁷ Betsill and Bulkeley. (2004). Op cit, page 486-487.

International Emissions Analysis Protocol (IEAP)¹³⁸. These innovative technical tools are now used by a large community of practitioners (local officials, consulting companies, etc.). In 2006, the International CCP Report¹³⁹ was reporting that its members were reducing annually their emissions for a total of 60 million tons equivalent CO₂ and saving annually \$2.1 billion USD. But beyond these quantitative achievements¹⁴⁰, for Jeb Brugmann the greatest victory of ICLEI is to have succeeded in “*institutionalizing a standard of practice of local climate action*”¹⁴¹.

According to the former ICLEI SG, the spread of the campaign owes a lot to the successor of Bill Jessop, Nancy Skinner¹⁴². She has expanded the program in many new countries, securing funding from American agencies and foundations. Thus, CCP activities started in the second half of the 1990s in Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Mexico, Brazil, and South Africa. Among those eight countries, only two (Thailand and Indonesia) do not have today an ICLEI office. This is to say that the CCP campaign has given ICLEI tremendous leverage in its development towards new geographical areas.

III) Limits and Evolution of the CCP

Indeed, when the projects’ funding came to an end, the CCP country offices started to diversify their activities in order to reach new financial resources. The number of new sections created definitely transformed the morphology of the organization and its movement, allowing it to expand beyond its primary northern focus, giving it the opportunity to be truly

¹³⁸ Can be viewed at <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=ghgprotocol>.

¹³⁹ ICLEI, (2006). ICLEI International Report – The Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. Viewed 12 September 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/Programs/CCP/CCP_Reports/ICLEI_CCP_International_2006.pdf

¹⁴⁰ These figures are all estimations. Therefore, their cogency is questionable. The current ICLEI Climate Manager is thus reluctant to use these figures. This lack of data solidness is part of the rationale behind the development of the Carbons Centre. Source: Yunus Arikan, interview September 2010.

¹⁴¹ Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010.

¹⁴² At the time the US office was only a CCP program office depending from the World Secretariat in Toronto. Nancy Skinner was therefore the head of the CCP campaign for the USA and the world. Let’s mention that she is now a Democrat member of the US Congress. Such trajectories are typical of social movement: the movement attracts high potential individuals who find in the collective action resources that help them to develop their leadership capacities. Numerous examples showed that social movement leaders, once the movement gets institutionalized, access to traditional high-level political positions. This example backs the argument that ICLEI has institutionalized its movement, at least in the US.

international – global should we say. However, what has for sure been a strength to ICLEI's development, has also been a great vulnerability. Indeed, when Nancy Skinner left the organization, a new International CCP manager was appointed. Thus, as the US activities had developed beyond the sole climate issue, it has been decided to create an independent US office with Michelle Wyman as the new Executive Director. This is here where the story gets blurry. For Jeb Brugmann – who was no longer SG since 2000 – “*Michelle Wyman rejected this history, she acted only as the US Executive Director*”¹⁴³. Nobody was then in charge to secure new financial resources for the CCP programs and logically, when the projects ended, ICLEI found itself in a very difficult position and the CCP campaign started to fatally decline. This period corresponds with the moment (March 2002) when the Conservative majority led by Stephen Harper won the elections in Canada. After many years of support, the Canadian government stopped the environmental programs that were benefiting ICLEI WS. In a few years, all the global ICLEI activities got affected and the CCP brought down in most of the regions where alternative funding could not be secured.

Another limitation to the success of the CCP campaign should be mentioned. Indeed, pilot cities like Hanover, Germany, which had initiated actions to reduce its community energy consumption as early as the 1980s, got very frustrated at the beginning of the 2000s when they realized that in spite of true efforts made, the total level of GHG emissions had continued to increase steadily as the use of car was widening¹⁴⁴. In spite of a large number of projects based on the implementation of technical innovation and the rationalization of energy consumption, the evolution of consumption patterns and individuals' behaviors, the carbon footprint of the community continued to grow. Embedded into a wider system of carbon intensive economic growth and a globalized evolution of consumption behavior, the capacity of a city council to effectively reduce its GHG emissions are undermined. Even more when the actions implemented focus on technical improvements; generally the human factor has been left behind by the CCP campaign while focusing on measures that would appear as rigorous and profitable. Ironically, whereas the initial promoters of the CCP campaign came in majority from a grass-roots background prone to challenge the concept of growth and consumption as well as claiming the need for behavioral change, the attention they devoted to

¹⁴³ Jeb Brugmann, interview September 2010.

¹⁴⁴ This anecdote is reported by Konrad Otto-Zimmermann during its interview in August 2010.

design technology intensive projects supposedly more efficient to the eyes of their audience, has led to low results in some CCP municipalities¹⁴⁵.

While, the CCP campaign showed a loss of impetus in many countries, the recent success of its South Asian segment contrasts the record. In 2009, ICLEI South Asia Secretariat published a report documenting the GHG reductions in 54 South Asian cities (in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal)¹⁴⁶. While GHG inventories are not flying anymore in European or Japanese cities, they are totally new to developing countries because of the evolution of the global context. These countries start to measure their GHG emissions to evaluate their reductions' potential, and the motivation is even greater as new financial resources are developing¹⁴⁷. The CCP campaign is therefore moving its geographical focus; ICLEI current Secretary General wraps it up:

*“And this is why when we talk about ICLEI development’s strategy globally we have to acknowledge that some offices say “but we are at this stage, a lot of cities are just discovering climate and we need to do what has been done 20 years ago somewhere else”. So we cannot just abandon it and say we won’t do climate inventories anymore. So what we have to offer at one time is getting wider.”*¹⁴⁸

The CCP campaign had deeply shaped ICLEI’s organizational structure and movement’s discourse. Indeed, under the pull of the campaign development ICLEI opened six new offices mostly in emerging economies. Once again, ICLEI has emphasized the rigor of its

¹⁴⁵ “Low” in terms of relative reductions achieved compared to the satisfying absolute reductions. The current SG has observed an evolution in the composition of the environmental departments and therefore ICLEI liaisons: from the original environmentalist, “technology oriented people, engineers and so on, took over”. The prominence of such backgrounds might prevent the emergence of local climate policies more oriented towards behavioral change and sociologically-driven measures. Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹⁴⁶ ICLEI-South Asia. (2009). Energy and Carbon Emissions Profiles of 54 South Asian Cities. Published with the support of the British High Commission in India. Viewed 12 September 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/Programs/CCP/CCP_Reports/ICLEI_Indian_Cities_2009.pdf.

¹⁴⁷ The Clean Development Mechanisms for instance allows projects in developing countries to receive funding proportionate to their potential of GHG reductions. The question of cities’ access to climate funding as been addressed in a recent ICLEI report, it thus mentions the difficulty to reach these international financial resource; structures like being capable of supporting LGs in their attempts. Source: ICLEI. (2009). *Cities in a Post-2012 Climate policy Framework*. ICLEI Global Reports. Published with the support of GTZ, viewed 12 September 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/Services/Cities_in_a_Post-2012_Policy_Framework-Climate_Financing_for_City_Development_ICLEI_2010.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

approach around solid tools (HEAT and IEAP) and a powerful methodological discourse (the Five Milestone Process) that has led a movement of institutionalization of a standard of practice. With the CCP campaign, climate change has been a major axis of ICLEI's development and international recognition. The relative decline of the program contrasts with a renewal in some developing countries. Such evidence might influence ICLEI's organizational development and discourse for the years to come.

The difficult End of a Pioneering Decade

The first decade of ICLEI's existence is largely dominated by its two "international"¹⁴⁹ programs: LA21 and CCP, a duo crafted in the crucible of the founding congress. The spirit and method of Irvine has left its footprint on a movement that strategically and pragmatically sought its international recognition in a complex system of agencies and programs dedicated to environment, urban settlements, and development, but also at the local level where environmental planning was not yet a standard practice. The first ICLEI achievements in the UN system (the founding in the UN Headquarters and the LA21 process) raised expectations of an institutionalization of local authorities in the international system; expectations quickly torn down after the Habitat II conference. However, ICLEI's method of demonstrating its approach at the local level and then replicating on a wide scale produced an even greater outcome: being LA21 or local climate actions, a standard of practice has been put into motion *beyond* ICLEI's borders. The SMO's discourse has been refined around its capacity to replicate localized successes at the global scale. This phase of ascension has witnessed the expansion of the movement, in particular to the South, and sustained the organizational growth making ICLEI the largest LGs' network in terms of resources and permanent staff mobilized¹⁵⁰.

Nevertheless, the early 2000s showed a loss of impetus of the two emblematic initiatives as the concepts seemed to have exhausted some of the initial enthusiasm of the Rio Earth Summit (particularly for LA21) while their main financial resources dried up (particularly for the CCP). Though, the struggle for survival of many ICLEI program offices

¹⁴⁹ As ICLEI call them, whereas their nature would suggest the terms "global" or "transnational".

¹⁵⁰ According to ICLEI website, viewed 15 September 2010, www.iclei.org.

led to their organization empowerment and the widening of their activities beyond CCP and LA21. At the same time, this movement towards more decentralization of activities will progressively, in the middle of the second decade, leave the World Secretariat battered.

Part III. From the Technical Niche to the Global Sustainability Market

When the International Union of Local Authorities supported the creation of ICLEI, it did so as its Chair at the time thought it would stay focused on the niche of environmental protection¹⁵¹. Indeed the name and mission of ICLEI were limited to environmental initiatives. Though, a decade of practice around emblematic programs such LA21 has led the young social movement organization to explore the sustainability fields beyond the environmental focus. In parallel, from the first 200 municipalities' environmental departments, ICLEI has grown to a membership of 1,200 LGs and turned into the biggest LGs' network in terms of staff and budget.

In the meantime, once a technical niche, environmental matters have turned into one of the main agenda item of global politics under its reframing into the sustainability concept. Once a pioneer of local environmental initiatives, ICLEI became a global leader of urban sustainability expertise. However, this position has been earned in times where urban sustainability was indeed a niche. Today, the context is dramatically different and ICLEI is now competing with a wide array of organizations, from the Clinton Climate Initiative to IBM. As a consequence ICLEI, as a social movement organization is remodeling its structure, identity, and activities. Four successive chapters will address this contemporary evolution.

¹⁵¹ In his interview, Jeb Brugmann reports the enthusiasm of the Chair at the time. A mood that was not shared by many of its prominent member such as national associations that saw in ICLEI a new competitor. IULA therefore constrained ICLEI's founder to limit the scope of the new organization to environmental matters.

Chapter 5. A New Name for a Broader Mission

While its organizational face was changing, ICLEI movement's constituents have also undergone a significant transformation. During the founding congress in 1990, a movement of cutting-edge environmentalists once created an International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives that had demonstrated an instrumental role in the Rio Earth Summit. Ten years later in Johannesburg the face of the movement had evolved: a lot of the environmentalists had become green engineers and the notion of sustainability had made its way in becoming a consensual notion, even, some would argue, it had turned into a value¹⁵².

At the dawn of the 21st century, global sustainability is not anymore a jargon of environmental activists; it has imposed itself as the compass of global environmental and development agendas and turned into the new motto of many global companies. While ICLEI was pretty much alone in its niche at its beginnings, in 2002 it is facing a new extremely diverse and competing system of actors that challenges its status of pioneer in general and leader in its field, in a nutshell: its identity. The fact is that in 2003, ICLEI became ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. How does an organization like ICLEI decide to change its name? What is behind this change?

I) From LA21 to Local Action 21, Seeking a New Momentum, in Search of a New Approach

Rio had been a landmark for the environmental community and for ICLEI. Similarly Johannesburg has much less signification in general but also for ICLEI. In 1992, the social movement organization had imagined Local Agenda 21; in 2002, it came up with Local Action 21... but who knows that last concept? Local Action 21 was intended to encourage the international community to support LGs to implementing their sustainability agendas,

¹⁵² “A norm can be defined as a principle that intends to be implemented (it is a goal not a compulsory condition) and that results from institutional rules or habits. A value is an individual belief that a particular knowledge is true or morally good. If a norm can be enforced, a value cannot as it is, for an actor, related to the legitimacy of a knowledge.” page 614 (translated from French) in Labranche, S. (2002). La transformation des normes de participation et de durabilité en valeurs ? Réflexions pour la théorie des régimes. *Revue Études Internationales*, vol.34, no.4, Pp.611-629.

outcomes of the LA21 process, to turn from *agenda* to *action*¹⁵³. The reason why Local Action 21 never reached the level of popularity will not be addressed here¹⁵⁴, but it seems that ICLEI strategic management tried to reproduce the momentum of Rio, launching the second phase of a model that had known a certain success. However Johannesburg was not Rio.

In 2010, the Rio Earth Summit is still present in people's mind. The next Earth Summit in 2012 is already called Rio+20; as if Rio had been the start of everything – in a way it was. In 2002, in spite of many signs showing that the global context had deeply changed, the collective frame of action was still the same, and the quest for a rationale led ICLEI to adopt a posture symmetrical to what it had done ten years before. The fact is that the Secretary General had many reasons in seeking to launch a similar momentum.

As it has been shown in the Part II of this paper, ICLEI had managed to benefit greatly from the fresh start of Rio through its two pioneer programs: LA21 and CCP. However, we saw that both of them were starting to decline as they seemed less attractive as not pioneer anymore and were therefore not mobilizing new financial resources for ICLEI. As the movement's expansion had relied on these two driving forces, their decline has been perceived by the strategic management as a significant shadow on the future. In addition, let's not forget that in 2002, ICLEI had a rather new Secretary General in the person of Konrad Otto-Zimmermann who had to impose his leadership to lead smoothly a constellation of organizations on which he had no legal leverage. Indeed, as he mentioned in his interview, the governance structure of ICLEI does (still today) not allow the SG to force anyone of the independent offices to follow its directions. The SG has therefore to demonstrate "*a track record*" and his "*commitment to the core values*"¹⁵⁵ in order to convince the other Executive Directors to follow its strategic guidance. Arguably, at the same time, the LA21 was definitely

¹⁵³ ICLEI. (2002). *Local Government and the Johannesburg Summit*. Viewed 13 September 2010, http://www.city.sendai.jp/kankyotoshisuishin/kokusai-e/pdf/LG_summit.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ Still we can formulate some hypotheses. The success of the LA21 concept was linked with the revolutionary character of Rio and its aura, Johannesburg not having the same aura, Local Action 21 did not fly. One can also, assume that the terminology (Local Action 21) is too close from LA21 (their acronyms being the same), and so on.

¹⁵⁵ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann mentioned these two expressions as the reason why he was able to provide the organization with strategic leadership.

rooted in the values of the movement as a defining program; building on this historic effort would certainly demonstrate this “commitment”.

One other element has to be taken into account. In 2002, the World Secretariat is not formally in charge of the CCP campaign, at least this is what the new SG understands from the history of ICLEI where it was the US office that had historically been leading the international CCP campaign, in particular in sourcing the funding. But, in 2002, the US secretariat had a new Executive Director, Michelle Wyman, who stopped to care for the international side of the CCP, focusing on the US domestic level (see Chapter 4). Whatever the reason, ICLEI SG was not considering the climate activities as being part of his activities. This situation led him to concentrate on the LA21 as a thread to future developments. This is even truer that, at the time, the international climate regime evolution was difficult to read as the enforcement of the Kyoto Protocol was put on hold by the US opposition to ratify it; which paradoxically was the reason why the CCP campaign was spreading quickly in North America.

Thus, the new Secretary General tried to trigger a new momentum in the evolution of the movement, launching the decade of the global implementation of the LA21. But, the global context was not the one of the 1990s, and the Local Action 21 never flew. At the same time the WS was experiencing financial difficulties in Toronto (see Chapter 6) and the SG had hard times in securing funding. In a perverse cycle, it seems that the Local Action 21 did not resonate among potential sources of funding as LA21 had in its time. As a matter of fact, in its normative, political and market dimensions, the global environment had changed.

II) From Environment to Sustainability, A Frame Alignment

The Johannesburg Earth Summit in 2002 is not a landmark in the sense Rio was, it did not popularize a concept (SD) nor create new UN Conventions. In a way Johannesburg was more the confirmation of the ideas launched ten years before. Within the ten years that separate the two conferences, a wide range of actors had jumped into the concept of

sustainability. In particular, a truly globalized business community had eventually¹⁵⁶ widely embraced the concept of sustainability. With thousands of members from the private sector, the Global Compact, launched by Kofi Annan in 2000, was there to testify that business was finally investing the arena. Indeed, a global sustainability market had emerged and many consulting companies started to provide organizations with, for instance, environmental services such as carbon inventories or extra-financial reporting.

In the mean time, ten years after Rio, the situation was still gloomy, global environmental change was more than ever a preoccupation as collective action problems like climate change were remaining unsolved. The enthusiasm of the early 1990s that had characterized Rio conference was over. The hopes of LGs' networks to institutionalize their participation to UN negotiations had faced their limits in Istanbul in 1996. More generally, the hope for cooperative international relations around the practice of a pacified multilateralism had aborted quickly, while an absence of US leadership was leaving the Kyoto Protocol on hold. In addition, Local Agenda 21, in spite of its large diffusion, was still often stuck before the stage of the implementation as the very existence of Local Action 21 shows¹⁵⁷.

Thus, in 2002, ICLEI was in a way forced to deal with, on the one hand, a new large but intensely competitive market context where environmental protection had been integrated into the wider concept of sustainability, and, on the other hand, gloomy perspectives in the area of an international cooperation that was undermined by a move backwards towards Realpolitik.

If apparently benign¹⁵⁸, changing the name of a social movement's organization is never a neutral move. The name of a SMO is condensing its identity and the way the movement is positioning itself towards the outside world; renaming means therefore modifying the collective action frame that defines the identity and actions of the movement's

¹⁵⁶ The World Business Council for Sustainable Development was created in 1992 in the lead-up to Rio, viewed 13 September 2010, <http://www.wbcsd.org>.

¹⁵⁷ "As local governments worldwide strive to move from agenda to action in the post-Johannesburg decade, Local Action 21 will serve as the "motto, mandate and movement" towards change." Page 18, ICLEI. (2002). *Local Government and the Johannesburg Summit*. Op cit.

¹⁵⁸ While answering the question about the change of the name, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann simply mentions that it was an automatic evolution that seemed necessary after Johannesburg, nothing more.

constituents, the core of the discourse is then altered. The fact is that the global context, the structure of the organization and the identity of the movement had changed. As a consequence, it is no surprise that ICLEI modified its name to adapt to these new conditions: it is not a benign event, it is a strategic action.

The concept of frame alignment¹⁵⁹ helps to understand the process that led to this change. It designates “strategic efforts by social movement organizations to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of prospective constituents and actual or prospective resource providers”¹⁶⁰. As it has been mentioned above, the notion of sustainability imposed itself as the encompassing concept that integrates, *inter alia*, environmental sustainability; talking about sustainable planning instead of environmental planning for example better fitted the evolution of the language. Sustainability became more salient than environmental protection as a convention¹⁶¹ or a value. While ICLEI’s collective action frame was only promoting “environmental initiatives”, an amplification¹⁶² of its frame would invigorate the existing values of the movement in broadening the spectrum of action and matching the mainstream grammar. This is even truer as the movement’s narrative is closely linked to the emergence of the Local Agenda 21¹⁶³ that does not constrain itself to the environmental matters but offers a method to help reaching sustainability in its various dimensions. In reality, this frame alignment was as much to amplify the resonance of ICLEI’s discourse in its actual field of action as to align it to its own set of values. Jeb Brugmann confirms this assumption as he says that the main reason why ICLEI had been constrained in the definition of its name to the environmental field was mostly because of political reasons: IULA did not want the new sister organization to have a too large mandate. Indeed, while its founder was willing to refer to the concept of sustainable development in the name of the organization, the patron organization systematically opposed. In 2003, ICLEI had emancipated from the

¹⁵⁹ Benford, Robert D. and Snow, David A. Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000, Vol. 26 Issue 1, p611, 29p.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, page 624.

¹⁶¹ Schelling has developed the notion of salience as a solution that people would use in a situation of an absence of communication. Schelling, T. C. (1960). *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

¹⁶² Benford, Robert D. and Snow, David A. (2000). *Op cit*.

¹⁶³ ICLEI report from the Johannesburg summit shows the omnipresence of the concept of sustainability together with the Local Agenda 21. ICLEI. (2002). *Local Government and the Johannesburg Summit*. *Op cit*.

patronage of IULA – engaged into a long and difficult merging process with UTO – and the Johannesburg Earth Summit had made obvious that an organization that wants to attract funding and members in a competitive environment had to brand its action under the concept of sustainability. As a consequence, ICLEI became ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and the mission of the organization has been officially enlarged “to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions.”¹⁶⁴

Aligning an organization to a new context is a difficult task. First, the strategic management has to understand how far the context has changed. Then, it has to convince the movement’s constituents of its understanding in engaging a frame alignment process. Here, it needed to mobilize strong leadership resource: for ICLEI it has been the very process of building the SG’s leadership that is partly responsible for sticking to concepts that did not resonate anymore in the new institutional, political, and market environment. Nevertheless, the renaming of the SMO in 2003 is the proof that an alignment process of the collective action frame is underway. The evolution of the World Secretariat activities and their re-concentration around the narrative of climate action is the result of this process. This will be shown in the following chapters.

¹⁶⁴ Page 5 of *ICLEI Charter and By-Laws*. Viewed 14 September 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/governance/Charter/ICLEI_Charter_and_By-Laws_2006_changed-v2.pdf. Konrad Otto-Zimmermann mentioned in his interview that the fact that liaisons of ICLEI in LGs were still heads of environmental department is the reason why the mission is still stressing the environmental character of the initiatives.

Chapter 6. The World Mayors Council on Climate Change or the Difficulty to Innovate

Officially, the World Mayors Council on Climate Change (WMCCC) was initiated in 2005 by the Mayor of Kyoto at the time, soon after the Kyoto Protocol entered into force¹⁶⁵, as an effort to engage the political level of local governments in the global climate advocacy. As its SG and Climate Manager mention today, ICLEI has a history of involving heads of environmental departments, but the lead-up to COP13 in Bali showed that climate change was starting to mobilize the head of governments; LGs had to follow the trend and gear up its action.

The WMCCC was intended to become the nodding point of local leaders in the field of climate change, but it did not. Somehow, by early 2009, before Copenhagen, it seemed not very active while looking at its website activity. It is only a few months before COP 15 that it seemed to come back to life. Why did “*the good idea fail*”¹⁶⁶? What happened to the initial ambition? But, first, why was the WMCCC created? What role did ICLEI play?

I) The Rationale behind the WMCCC Creation: a Need for Coordinated, Integrated, and Political Advocacy

In 1994, when the first UNFCCC COP was decided to take place the next year in Berlin, ICLEI decided to organize a second Municipal Leaders Summit side the negotiations. At the time, for ICLEI staff, “*cities have to be there, they have to be recognized as major actors*”¹⁶⁷. The summit was “*a great success*”: Mayors and environment staff met, discussed climate action and the progress of the CCP campaign, and eventually they delivered a declaration to the climate negotiators. For many years, this is the method that would be repeated, a Mayor or a city official would address the UNFCCC plenary as a representative of the LGMA constituency. It is argued by ICLEI SG that a city representative, who is often a

¹⁶⁵ According to the website, viewed 15 August 2010, www.iclei.org/wmccc.

¹⁶⁶ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

well-known Mayor,¹⁶⁸ has more impact than an ICLEI staff. An idea confirmed by the theory: personalization of the representation through charismatic individuals helps social movements to multiply the impact of their communication. The difficulty raised by this approach is that for every COP, ICLEI had to get into contact with a relevant Mayor, negotiate his or her participation, brief him or her accordingly, then find another one when the first one would cancel due to a last-minute change of schedule and so on. To all accounts, making Mayors participating to such events has always been a tortuous process.

In addition, the need to move on the climate activities from a technical approach to a political effort grew overtime¹⁶⁹. Indeed, the CCP campaign was developed by environmental departments and ICLEI experts; there was no high-level steering group behind it, “*it’s not Mayors, just city representatives*”¹⁷⁰. Such a lack seems to have been identified as the source of the discrepancy between the (technical) CCP and the rise of more organized advocacy activities. There was a need to link the two aspects of ICLEI climate work in a more integrated way.

In the meantime, a new element had made the situation even trickier. While in 1995, ICLEI is the only local governments’ association to be present as an observer organization, the lead up to Bali will see the emergence of new organizations like C40¹⁷¹, and a growing interest from existing networks such as UCLG. The Secretary General of ICLEI feared then that the frustration that had been generated by the lack of cooperation between IULA and UTO for many years in Europe could repeat again. Hence, creating a flexible structure open to all local governments’ networks would help to coordinate the general LGMA advocacy in UN climate forums of negotiation and increase its impact. This is, according to Otto-Zimmermann, the rationale he developed while designing the WMCCC.

¹⁶⁸ In Copenhagen in 2009, for instance, Michael Bloomberg, the Mayor of New York City, addressed the COP plenary.

¹⁶⁹ When asked about the reasons to launch the WMCCC, ICLEI SG answers: “*So it is quite obvious that for ICLEI the CCP was a fairly technical campaign, we were dealing with the environment and energy Department who were dealing with the emissions reductions and s on, but there was no political corresponding activities.*”, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹⁷⁰ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

¹⁷¹ C40 is created in 2005, the same year as the WMCCC.

Though, it was crucial that such a structure of cooperation would not be created as an independent organization; it would have had a counter-productive effect by adding one new actor in the already complex organizational landscape¹⁷². This risk of an organizational inflation was clearly identified as Otto-Zimmermann remembers: *“it’s not useful if now all the associations create their own Mayors’ mechanism, because we scatter and we lose momentum and we lose power”*. Thus, he thought the WMCCC as a pool of proactive Mayors from various LGs’ networks, which would unite under a common banner when they intervene globally on climate change and promote a common discourse on the major role local actors can play in the climate regime. In other words, ICLEI Secretary General tried to formalize an inter-organizational arena under an identifiable name and site. Such an arena was designed to be the site of climate specific discourse production, adjustment and mobilization, and to facilitate the coordination of climate actions among local governments’ networks. But, implementing an innovative idea is never easy.

II) The Challenge of Setting the WMCCC Up

Two main challenges had been quickly identified. First, one had to convince the various actors of the relevancy of such an inter-organizational initiative. Even within ICLEI, the task has not been easy for the Secretary General to convince his colleagues who were reacting: *“why do you want to create something outside of ICLEI? While you should do it as an ICLEI thing.”*¹⁷³ As a potential explanation of this resistance he mentions that other regional and national directors had not experienced the European frustration created by the IULA-UTO competition, and were reacting through the scope of their local preoccupation where they are indeed often in competition with other networks for recruiting members. Once, the internal level of resistance (more or less) overcome, potential partners had to be attracted

172 The author had the opportunity to acknowledge this permanent concern at ICLEI not to create new organizations that could make the organizational landscape of local governments’ associations even more scattered and difficult to read. Conversely, the Charter of ICLEI expressly shows a vision towards more integration; it thus mentions the ambition to become the environmental agent of UCLG: “The Association shall seek an agreement with United Cities and Local Governments whereby ICLEI serves as the World Organization’s environmental and sustainable development agent.”, in ICLEI Charter and By-Laws, viewed 5 September, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Global/governance/Charter/ICLEI_Charter_and_By-Laws_2006_changed- v2.pdf.

173 After Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

by the relevancy of the approach. What a better way to convince by showing? Thus, ICLEI SG started his endeavor, but he had to find someone to hold it outside from ICLEI as he says today:

“But then it has to be initiated by somebody else than ICLEI: who is there? Ok, if there is one thing that is famous as a notion it is Kyoto, everybody sees climate as Kyoto. (Not so much anymore, but many years ago Kyoto was just climate, and climate was Kyoto, all with a positive connotation). That is what we need!”

Once the Mayor of Kyoto accepted enthusiastically the idea, the second challenge was easily identified: recruiting relevant Mayors. Once again, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann tried to find a rationale in the choice of Mayors to invite. Thus, Mayors from cities where COPs had taken place were targeted. As mentioned before, reaching the highest political level of a city is a tortuous process, even more with some cities from countries with working cultures that are different from the Western way¹⁷⁴. Convincing a Mayor to chair this group has been extremely tortuous. At that time, the World Secretariat of ICLEI was based in Toronto. Therefore, very logically, the local Mayor was envisaged as a founding Chair as his city was a pioneer of climate action. However, in 2005, the UNFCCC COP was to take place in Montreal, the neighboring (and competing) city, hence the founding of the WMCCC had to happen there to get the attention of the climate community. This did not fit to the local politics and the personal rivalry opposing the two Mayors at the time: Toronto’s Mayor would not be the Chair if the founding meeting was set in Montreal. A safe alternative was found in the person of Bärbel Dieckmann; she was the Mayor of Bonn, Germany, where the UNFCCC Secretariat was located, and she was striving for a decade to give her city an international dimension after the relocation of most German Federal ministries to Berlin after the country reunification¹⁷⁵. At that moment the WMCCC had eventually a Chair, a symbolic honorary Chair (the Mayor of Kyoto), a group of motivated Mayors, it needed a Secretariat; logically ICLEI WS would play this role as the instigator. Thus, everything was there on the day of the founding meeting in December 2005, the casting was good, the stage (a round table in

¹⁷⁴ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann reported the difficulty to reach Marrakech Mayor for instance.

¹⁷⁵ After the World War II, Bonn became the official seat of the United Germany from 1949 to 1990. Because of its small size, Bonn was jokingly referred as the “Federal Village”. After 1990 and the relocation of the capital to Berlin, Bonn advocated its cause before the Federal Government to become the “German United Nations city”, as the administration likes to qualify it, Source:

http://www.bonn.de/wirtschaft_wissenschaft_internationales/uno-stadt/index.html?lang=en.

Montreal city hall) was symbolic, and the audience was strategic (COP negotiators). Once again, fifteen years after ICLEI founding congress, the dramaturgy was well orchestrated. Why then the WMCCC did not succeed like its patron?

III) Behind the “Failure”, ICLEI’s Difficulties

In 2005, the ICLEI World Secretariat was composed of six to seven persons... If not enough, the years that followed the creation are known as the “*darkest hours of the WS*”¹⁷⁶, the shift of Canadian government had dried up the financial resources; “*it was suddenly like , when you go from a rich pasture with flowers and grass and so on, to be put on sand, on a desert*”. The Secretary General was then striving to find resources to keep its office running, striving for survival. In these conditions servicing the WMCCC Chair appropriately was not made possible. And Konrad Otto-Zimmermann insists on the importance of the Secretariat in supporting its Chair, as Mayors “*are seating there with their name, but they need to be steered, to be managed*”, the meetings need to be prepared, briefing sheets to be handed in, etc. But, the WS has not the capacity to do so.

Another reason why the membership of the Council did not grow in these first years is because of the intense work needed to bring a new Mayor to join. In many cases, a simple invitation letter is not sufficient, a visit and a careful follow-up is required. Once again, there was no resources to do so, and no capacity to raise the necessary funds. The lack of media work was also undermining the attractiveness of the WMCCC for any Mayor of a big city who is careful about the way time is spent. And in the meantime, the C40 had been created, quickly backed by the Clinton Foundation’s capacity. This double movement of internal lack of resources and the parallel rise of a very similar body is for ICLEI SG responsible for the “*failure*” of the WMCCC to impose itself as the political platform of local governments’ climate advocacy. In a way, it demonstrates that a movement needs an organization to be sustained and developed. A battered WS could not play this role.

Though, after the successful meeting in Montreal, why the WMCCC has not managed to attract more attention of other LGs’ networks like UCLG? Many reasons can be

¹⁷⁶ Yunus Arikan, interview September 2010.

conjectured, in particular the fact that if ICLEI could not support it, who could? UCLG was just trying to establish its new infrastructure, the C40 as well. The environment was fatal.

Still, could the idea work out with better conditions? This is not sure. Indeed some concepts appear to be contradictory. While the WMCCC was supposed to be only a climate *banner* under which ICLEI could gather its partners to improve the coordination, when it was not meant to create a new organization, the group though, was designed and thought as an *organization*. Thus, a Chair, a Vice-Chair and an Honorary Chair were designated¹⁷⁷, Terms of Reference were agreed, Policy Guidelines set. All these attributes suggest that the WMCCC is actually an organization in itself in spite of no legal existence. It is indeed very difficult to imagine – the patterns available do not allow so – a formal entity that does not take an organizational form. The idea suggested here is that, when the first will was to build an innovative platform, the patterns used by the individuals who launch and gave its form to the WMCCC were limited, and inevitably rooted in the past. The very name of the new entity, using the word *Council*, the same word as in International Council for Environmental Initiatives, shows how innovative efforts are determined by existing patterns¹⁷⁸. The SMO literature is documenting this trend of trying to produce new content with old methods, and shows the extreme difficulty to innovate in terms of organizational patterns for collective action.

Launching the WMCCC, the WS of ICLEI fumbled a new approach; an effort that suffered from a lack of capacity and never realized and developed its potential of becoming a strong brand in its sector. Nevertheless, in 2009, the WMCCC was slowly starting to revive. During COP 15, the proactive Mayor of Mexico City, Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon, was elected as the new Chair and in May 2010, the Council convened the Mayors Adaptation Forum and

¹⁷⁷ The theoretical corpus of SMOs insists on the importance of the designation process of the movement's representatives; it is symbolic of the way the movement projects itself in the outside world. The rational and rather top-down process that led to the designation of the governing body was sending a subliminal message contradictory with the official wish to build an entity that is not owned by one LG network.

¹⁷⁸ This even truer as the use of popular and powerful concepts, collective frames, such as a council can be, is necessary to communicate widely and efficiently. The image of the municipal council is for sure an inspirational frame for local governments' networks.

issued the Bonn Declaration of Mayors on Adaptation [to climate change]; a new start consecutive to the revival of the ICLEI World Secretariat in Bonn with a new capacity and new resources. But yet, at the time these lines are written, the concept of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change still seems to have hard time to get popular within and outside ICLEI¹⁷⁹. Behind this effort appears in the background the dream of one local governments' actor powerful and integrative enough to play a major role at the global level, and particularly in the global environmental governance.

¹⁷⁹ The WMCCC Secretariat did completely not manage to “sell” the idea that the World Mayors Summit on Climate Change organized in Mexico City should be branded as a WMCCC event; ICLEI being mentioned as the organizer with a different status than UCLG, the other partner, while C40 declined the invitation to partner.

Chapter 7. The Local Government Climate Roadmap – Closer to the Holy Grail?

Launched in Bali in 2007 during COP 13, the Local Government Climate Roadmap brought together ICLEI, UCLG, Metropolis, C40 Cities for Climate Leadership Group, and the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, in a common advocacy effort. This unprecedented coordination of the major global networks of local governments makes more concrete the old dream of unitary advocacy in major UN forums. Did the Local Government Climate Roadmap come closer to this ‘holy grail’ of unitary action?

I) Reviving ICLEI Climate Advocacy

To understand such an initiative, one should look at how it was funded. Mainly, the project was financially backed by the European Commission through a project grant awarded by EuropeAid to ICLEI and UCLG. Then around the first core funding, other financial resources came from bilateral sources such as the Norwegian Government. Getting a substantial funding from the European Commission means competing in a bidding process and satisfying the requirements of such a procedure in which every bid receives a grade that depends on, among other things, the number of European partners involved.

With the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in 2005, and the start of the negotiations for the post-2012 period, the lead-up to Bali made clear that climate negotiations were gearing up. In the meantime, ICLEI global climate activities were limited to the CCP campaign which was led by the US and Australian national offices. As Konrad Otto-Zimmermann reports today, the climate negotiations in the UN forum were not mobilizing the directors of these ICLEI offices who were supposed to lead the global climate advocacy:

“We and the others in the organization, saw that our CCP people are not doing anything. [...] They could not do it, they didn’t have the experience, they did not live in this world of international negotiations and their political socialization was not socialization into a multilateral negotiation alliance. So we got nervous. And we were all, we the Europeans, Gino, Wolfgang, myself, many people were saying we need to live up to the negotiations, we need to influence them, we need to come up with our municipal leaders summit again. When Bali happens, we need to be there, but nothing was coming from our climate people.”

This feeling of urgency matched a favorable context as the European Union was keen on supporting climate advocacy. Therefore, it is the ICLEI European Secretariat that started the bidding process. For the reason mentioned before, it was necessary to get involved other organizations in the project to get a better grade from the bidding committee. But, the Secretary General insists also on the fact that European ICLEI staff was used to interact very often, in Brussels for instance, with other LG networks that are all based in Europe¹⁸⁰. It was a natural inclination to seek the cooperation of partners instead of competing with them; the shadow of the dark hours of the IULA-UTO confrontation seems to have played a significant role. A reason to this new organizational setup could have also been driven by the ICLEI Charter that expressly mentions that ICLEI shall seek to become UCLG's environmental agent globally. The collective dream of unitary action is never far.

II) Launching the Roadmap as a Collective Framing Process

Addressing the international climate community as one voice carrying a unique discourse that could make sense to the national delegations present in Bali is a demanding process. Since their creation, every association had developed its own rhetoric, mobilizing various interpretative schemes and logics of legitimization: UCLG always focuses on decentralization as a core value while C40 for instance, traditionally uses the image of metropolises leading by concrete and impressive actions. Frames of discourse then were for some more normative (UCLG) or instrumental (C40). Coordinating within the Climate Roadmap meant articulating the various logics into one coherent approach, making collective arbitrary decisions when it came to decide on the content of a publication or an intervention in a UNFCCC plenary.

Speaking of one voice means also to be visible as one actor, one group, as one entity you can name. The choice of the name, as it has already been mentioned a few times in this essay, reveals the intentions of the actors, the project they are carrying, the meaning they

¹⁸⁰ “*You would have so many meetings in Brussels. UCLG, Metropolis. So we said we need to do the Roadmap all together, because it’s impossible [to do something else].*”, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010. Indeed, UCLG and Metropolis are based in Barcelona, C40 has its headquarters in London. In addition, Europe has a very high concentration of environmental regional and national LG networks: Climate Alliance, Energies Cités, etc.

attribute to their actions. Its website explains very clearly the meaning of the Local Government Climate Roadmap: it is “mirroring” the two-year Bali Roadmap nation-states have decided to implement towards a post-2012 climate agreement within the framework of the UNFCCC¹⁸¹. By ‘mirroring’ nation-states, local governments suggest that there is a similar need to address the climate issue at the local level. They use the mainstream organizational concept at the moment, the “climate roadmap”, and reframe it as the “Local Government Climate Roadmap”. The lexical proximity is clearly intended to carry an untold message. This is a clever discursive trick that is targeting the frames of understanding of national delegations but also the ones of local leaders. Indeed, these local governments’ associations always have to produce meaning to both categories of actors – the participation of visible Mayors to the advocacy effort being a central tool of the advocacy activities; they have to be convinced to devote time and resources to do so. As Otto-Zimmermann, says, ICLEI is a “*facilitator*” between local authorities and the international community, LGs’ networks are the gearing box of this interaction; and using existing interpretive schemes such as the Roadmap lubricates the process.

Concretely, the Local Government Climate Roadmap has undertaken a rather large process of discourse construction. Indeed, beyond the practical information about the events coming up, a careful browse on its website reveals an important volume of documentation that can be classified in function of the audience targeted in two partially overlapping categories: on the one hand, there are the documents that are clearly targeting the national delegations, explaining the relevance of engaging local governments in climate efforts and documenting the existing actions undertaken¹⁸²; on the other hand, resources that are meant to provide local governments with a good understanding of the UNFCCC process and a set of discursive

¹⁸¹ Viewed 8 September 2010, <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=9639/>.

¹⁸² This category of documentation goes from positions of local governments on the UNFCCC negotiating texts, to declarations, or “Local Stories” of climate action. The City Climate Catalogue is an effort to take inventory of all the targets local governments have committed around the world; 3,000 of these were put together and disclose on a dedicated website during the Copenhagen summit; www.climate-catalogue.org.

arguments they can use while interacting with national delegations or justifying their actions before their council and community¹⁸³.

The instrumental role of ICLEI in acting as the secretariat of the Climate Roadmap, servicing the website or producing most of the documentation, gave the organization a pivotal and strategic role in producing the discursive frames, and coordinating the interests. A role that had actually started much before Bali, as ICLEI is the focal point for the LGMA constituency since its creation in 1995. This facilitating role reaches its culmination during the COP 15 in Copenhagen, where it registered around 1,500 local governments' participants representing the biggest delegation of all the organizations recognized by the UNFCCC¹⁸⁴.

III) Copenhagen, the Two Faces of the Momentum

To all accounts, the COP 15 created a huge momentum the environmental community had probably never known¹⁸⁵. With 250 Mayors present¹⁸⁶, local governments, massively showed that they were present, that they wanted to achieve a global agreement for the post-Kyoto era. The Local Government Climate Roadmap played a central role in coordinating the mobilization and making local leaders' participation relevant because as Konrad Otto-Zimmerman says "being heard does not just mean making noise in organizing a summit and making a declaration"¹⁸⁷, it means creating a strong interaction with national negotiating delegations.

183 This other category of resources encompasses 41 pages of briefing sheets, a glossary, a FAQ, or again an invitation to sign the [World Mayors and Local Governments Climate Protection Agreement](#). Some of the content that is justifying the legitimate role of LGs in the climate negotiations cannot really be put in one or another category as they try to convince both local leaders and national delegates.

¹⁸⁴ In 2010, during the briefing to April NGOs, after the confusion created by a too large number of participants (40,000) at COP 15, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, reacting to the critics that arises from NGOs about its management of the crisis, Yvo de Boer was ironizing about the size of ICLEI delegation. From the author's own experience.

¹⁸⁵ Only Earth Summits in 1992 and 2002 might have achieved such a mobilization. 130 heads of states are supposed to have taken part to the COP at some point, 40, 000 total participants were registered while 50,000 participants have taken part to the alternative forum Klimaforum; this is still more than Rio 108 heads of states, and the 17,000 participants to the parallel NGO forum. Source: <http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>.

¹⁸⁶ According the LGCR website, <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=11561>.

¹⁸⁷ Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, interview August 2010.

The Climate Lounge is indeed the demonstration of a coordinated and well-informed advocacy effort. Thus, during the eleven days it lasted, it hosted “70 events including Mayor-ministerial level negotiation meetings with more than 20 countries, high level interviews, regional/ national panel/workshop sessions, media-launch events and daily briefings, the LOUNGE became the largest, longest and highest level local government event held during a Climate COP”¹⁸⁸. Beyond the question of the important funding needed to rent such a meeting space and the capacity required to organize the programs, schedule the meetings, etc., the knowledge on how to design such a program and to make it a success cannot be improvised, it is the result of many years of learning. To this extent, one can understand the crucial role ICLEI played in pulling it all together. Indeed, among the organizations involved in the Climate Roadmap, only ICLEI was the organization that had both the capacity to organize large events and the knowledge about the way the climate negotiations were actually working. The way a “Non-governmental organization”¹⁸⁹ can submit a document to the UNFCCC Secretariat or invite national delegations to discuss with local governments from their country is based on an expertise accumulated over the years and the slow reinforcement of ICLEI capacities¹⁹⁰.

This combination of a strong participation and multiple interactions with negotiators resulted in a rather important presence of local, regional, and sub-national levels of government in the negotiating texts of the LCA and KP tracks as ICLEI Climate Manager reports in *A Critical Analysis of COP15*¹⁹¹. Though, the confusion triggered by the leak of new draft texts during the second week generated a lack of trust among the parties. This tensed context combined with the inherent complexity of addressing climate change, led to the outcome known as the Copenhagen Accord, a text taken as a note by the COP decision. In this text, no reference is made to the role of LGMAs. Whereas, the advocacy effort of the

¹⁸⁸ Page 4 in Local Government Climate Roadmap (2010), *Prior, During and Post COP15 -A Local Government Report*, viewed 8 September 2010, http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/template/project_templates/climate-lounge/files/COP_15_Outcome/ROADMAP_COP_15_Report_23_March_10_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁸⁹ Because it is neither a party to the Convention nor an Intergovernmental Organization, ICLEI is registered as an NGO observer organization in spite of its intergovernmental nature.

¹⁹⁰ Yunus Arikan, ICLEI Climate Manager, reports how he advised the Climate Roadmap participants to make a submission in Poznan during the COP14, which had never been done before...

¹⁹¹ Arikan, Y. (2010). *A Critical Analysis of COP15, the Challenge of Seeing the Forest through the Trees*. ICLEI internal document not published.

Local Government Climate Roadmap had produced its results in the draft texts, the chaotic evolution of the negotiation process made irrelevant most of the achieved outcome .

In spite of this unfortunate outcome, the Climate Roadmap is considered by the various organizations as a success. Even more now, after the 2010 August Climate Talks, when the content of the drafting texts that had disappeared at the end of COP15, has come back to surface and is now the basis of UNFCCC discussions while the Copenhagen Accord has never been recognized a proper status. The other source of satisfaction the organizations can get from the process is that they proved to their members they are capable of working all together above the usual organizational competition. Indeed, a substantive basis of common discursive material has been produced and will for sure frame the advocacy efforts of LGs' associations for the years to come.

In 2010, the EU funding that was backing financially the Roadmap has come to an end. Nevertheless, whereas the Climate Roadmap was designed to last two years until a post-2012 agreement is found, the global context motivated ICLEI to keep using the Roadmap as the basis of its advocacy in the UNFCCC process. While C40 and Metropolis – which had never been very active – are no longer interacting with ICLEI, UCLG however is still a close partner. Looking in further detail at the framing processes and contests that occurred in the context of the Climate Roadmap would allow to understanding better the nature of the relationship and socialization process these networks maintain and how far their discourses have come closer¹⁹².

The context has now changed. The UNFCCC Secretariat and the KP and LCA Chairs are now pushing the parties to negotiate around core components such as Climate Finance, REDD+, or Adaptation, and then, later, bring these “building blocks” into one coherent system. According to Yunus Arian¹⁹³, this has a major implication for local governments: if

¹⁹² A careful analysis of the minutes of the various meetings, of the documents anterior to the collaboration for every organization involved, interviews of the various individuals who were conducting this process for in the respective networks, could bring such a better understanding. Unfortunately, undertaking such an effort goes beyond the scope and ambition of this Master's thesis.

¹⁹³ Interview, September 2010.

they manage to draw and start implementing at their scale efficient mechanisms, they could then push to be integrated in this global and coherent system. This new framework calls for new ways of acting for local governments. The next chapter will show how a revived World Secretariat is positioning Carbonn as an attempt to fit this new setting.

Chapter 8. Carbonn, an Initiative Symbolic of a Strengthened World Secretariat

Since the early age of ICLEI in 1990, the big picture, the global environmental governance has drastically changed. Rio has been a landmark in the spread of the concept of sustainable development through all the concentric circles of global governance (from local governments to global businesses). If Johannesburg's Earth Summit has not had such an impact, still, it has been the confirmation that a deep and global (in scope and space) had been initiated ten years before. As a direct aftermath ICLEI rebranded itself into ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, widening its scope to better reflect the evolution of its discursive environment.

After difficult years, ICLEI has managed to rebuild a World Secretariat in a strategic location. Those revived and strengthened headquarters are the answer of ICLEI as a movement and an organization to reinforce its global reach in a context where competition is getting tougher and new challenges are rising. Therefore, *Carbonn* centre and *Resilient Cities* congress can be understood as a strategic and discursive attempt to position attractive concepts on the global arena of climate change and urban sustainability.

I) A Strengthened World Secretariat to Deal with a New Context

The mobilization around UNFCCC fifteenth Conference of Parties made one thing obvious: the vast number and nature of actors that have an interest in participating to the climate negotiations and more generally to the forums constituted by the side-events are

revealing the extraordinary efforts produced by institutions, countries, companies, civil society movements, etc., to take part to a constellation of “framing contests”¹⁹⁴ occurring in the field of climate change and sustainability in general. How many declarations from indigenous people, business representatives or environmental NGO have been reported in the media? Every pole of interest is promoting its own understanding of the issue and the solutions it needs. The interests at stake are indeed enormous: from the micro debates on the Clean Development Mechanisms and the way the GHG abatements are calculated to the paradigmatic debate between tenants of a market approach and tenants of a central authority one, climate change allows every actor to engage into a sort of *meta* framing contest¹⁹⁵.

Since 1990, the big picture has changed; it has become bigger, much bigger. Like any other pioneer organization, this new context is a major challenge; the UNEP, for instance, is not anymore automatically hosting LGs congresses or summits in the UN Headquarters. Obvious but true. As a consequence, the position and the capacity for ICLEI to make its discourse, its framing of solutions to global environmental change, is seriously challenged by competing understandings, other stories. It is in this context that the social movement organization is rebuilding its World Secretariat.

Following the pace of the climate and sustainability discussions – arenas of framing contests – is getting more and more difficult as the number of arenas is increasing exponentially, and of course some are more strategic than others; the most strategic being the ones that are the hardest to get in. Getting in requires symbolic and material resources, recognition and expertise. ICLEI through its climate centre is thus the only LG association participating to the International Standardization Organization’s (ISO) workshops on building

¹⁹⁴ Benford, Robert D.; Snow, David A. Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. Annual Review of Sociology, 2000, Vol. 26 Issue 1, p611, 29p. By “framing contests” the two authors point out the competition happening between actors in the construction of meaning: “There is widespread agreement among movement framing researchers that the development, generation, and elaboration of collective action frames are contested processes. All actors within the collective action arena who engage in this reality construction work are embroiled in the politics of signification. This means that activists are not able to construct and impose on their intended targets any version of reality they would like; rather there are a variety of challenges confronting all those who engage in movement framing activities.” Page 625.

¹⁹⁵ One of the main discussion in 2010 among the various UN agencies and programs was about the competing concepts of “Green Growth”, “Clean Growth”, “Green Economy”.

a standard for GHG reporting in organizations¹⁹⁶. The ISO is one of these strategic areas where technical standards are set. Participating to the drafting stage of such standards is an enormous advantage to drive collective action towards a direction consistent with the organization's objectives. At a different level, in 2010, ICLEI Secretary General has been appointed Chair of the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Council on Urbanization¹⁹⁷. Since its creation in 1971 the WEF has turned into one major arena where global affairs are discussed. These two examples show that ICLEI is not doing bad at being present in highly strategic forums.

However, these recent achievements would not have been possible without the existence in the World Secretariat, on one hand, of an ICLEI Climate Manager and, on the other hand, a core team allowing the Secretary General to dedicate time to this new position – not only honorary. The experience of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change has shown how a WS challenged in its very existence had undermined the capacity of ICLEI to sustain globally a leading position in the climate field. Conversely, the two examples mentioned above are here to attest a revival of the WS. Indeed, since 2008, ICLEI has signed an agreement with the city of Bonn that allows the organization to channel EU programmatic funding directed to EU disadvantaged regions. Today the WS counts around 26 permanent staff against six a couple of years before.

Such a strengthened body has an increased capacity to drive ICLEI's collective vision and activities at the global level. This new situation opens a space to rationalize the current governance of the organization which cohesion is, according to its SG, "partly based on friendship". Indeed, as of today, all the regional and national offices are legally independent entities with no legal obligation to follow the SG's strategic guidance. This unusual situation for a global organization, not so much for a SMO, is today being challenged by the evolution of the environment. A symbolic detail illustrates this challenge: ICLEI has only one (non active) member in China; this very same country that is now the first global emitter of GHG, where urbanization is galloping, the new world economic centre; in a nutshell, the place to be

¹⁹⁶ According to Yunus Arian, interview September 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Viewed 12 September 2010,
[http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=1487&tx_ttnews\[pS\]=1284308965&tx_ttnews\[pointer\]=2&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4468&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=1556&cHash=fcbe560279](http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=1487&tx_ttnews[pS]=1284308965&tx_ttnews[pointer]=2&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4468&tx_ttnews[backPid]=1556&cHash=fcbe560279)

for an association that focuses on sustainable urbanization. One of the main barriers to the Chinese expansion had been the congenital suspicion of the Communist authorities to let a foreign organization directly interact with its local governments. Though, China is blossoming, opening itself to the world and it seems now ICLEI could open an office there¹⁹⁸. However, this would only be possible if the person appointed as the national director is a Chinese member of the Party. The current cohesion of ICLEI's governance relying today on friendship and a commitment to the same vision cannot afford such a competing logic of loyalty. This detail is now reactivating a governance reform that will eventually lead every ICLEI office to sign an agreement establishing a legal subordination to the World Secretariat. As of 2010, the only office to have signed such a contract is the US one; the others will follow – when the Global Administrator will find the time to negotiate those¹⁹⁹.

II) Carbonn and Resilient Cities, the First Fruits of a New Approach

However, the substantial development of the WS still relies on a funding that will stop after 2011²⁰⁰ and it is an absolute necessity for the organization, and its future capacity to lead, to develop concepts that could bring in new financial resources. This is the logic behind Carbonn and Resilient Cities.

Carbonn, the Bonn Center for Local Climate Action and Reporting²⁰¹, has been launched during COP15 as a joint initiative of ICLEI and UNEP in order to support local authorities to measure and disclose their GHG emissions. Indeed, if local emissions' mitigation actions are numerous, there is today no mechanism that would allow a clear assessment and could help to the spread of a common methodology in accounting and reporting these efforts. The measure of GHG emissions and their abatement is a topic where controversy is consubstantial as the figures always rely on estimations made according to

¹⁹⁸ This is confirmed, ICLEI is planning to open an office there.

¹⁹⁹ This information comes from the interview with Konrad Otto-Zimmermann. Once again it demonstrates how the structure of the movement is determined by the resources available.

²⁰⁰ The EU funding channelled through the city of Bonn is part of It had been allocated to the city of Bonn after the Federal capital was relocated to Berlin with the reunification.

²⁰¹ www.carbonn.org

emission coefficients applied to the consumption of energy²⁰². Indeed, when, in 1997, the negotiators agreed on the Kyoto Protocol, few of them had an idea of how emissions and their abatements would be measured. Since then, the emissions' measuring has been a hot topic of UNFCCC negotiations. This is why, nation-states and their experts, have introduced the concept of MRV actions: Monitorable, Reportable, and Verifiable. Whereas MRV has quickly become the compass to any mitigation collective action among nation-states, Carbons is an attempt to frame the local governments' efforts in a way that is consistent with emerging international principles. Doing so would help LGs to convince their national governments and their delegates in UNFCCC negotiations of the instrumental role they can play in the implementation of global mitigation efforts. As mentioned before, the new UNFCCC negotiating setup in *building blocks* makes initiatives like Carbons highly strategic as they could find their place in the future global climate regime, and therefore it means for the organization behind them they could access to substantive financial resources. At least this is the intention behind these initiatives.

The Resilient Cities congress is embedded into the same logic. Thus, in May 2010, took place in Bonn, the weekend before the UNFCCC June Talks, the First Congress on Cities and Adaptation to Climate Change, Resilient Cities 2010. It gathered around 500 hundred international experts, city technicians and officials in the first global platform dedicated to academic and practical exchange about adaptation to climate change and the notion of urban resilience. It is not a coincidence that it took place a few hundred meters away from the venue where national delegations were preparing the week of negotiations in the lead-up to Cancun. Indeed, the topic of adaptation only recently emerged in the negotiation process as the combined effect of a better scientific and therefore political understanding of climate impacts²⁰³, and also the increase of extreme weather events like Katrina hurricane. The recent apparition of adaptation on the climate agenda had not yet conducted to the

²⁰² Measuring the emissions of a local government is a very complex issue. The measure can take into account the corporate emissions (from the city administrative organization) and/or the community emissions (from all the population living within the administrative constituency). In addition, three various three levels of scope are detailed by the ICLEI International Emission Analysis Protocol.

²⁰³ The so-called Stern Review has played a decisive role in raising the issue of financing adaptation to climate in estimating the future costs of climate related events. Stern, N. (2006). "Stern Review on The Economics of Climate Change (pre-publication edition). Executive Summary". HM Treasury, London. Viewed 15 September 2010, http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sternreview_index.htm.

creation of a forum dedicated to scientific and political exchange on the topic, and ICLEI ceased the opportunity launching its congress that, to all accounts, managed to become a central forum²⁰⁴. As a particularity of the congress, ICLEI integrated a Mayors' segment, the Mayors Adaptation Forum, in order to add a political dimension to the event, and produce a declaration, the Bonn Declaration of Mayors on Adaptation. So it is not only an exercise gathering people to trigger constructive discussions, but also a discursive effort in order, once again, to spread ICLEI's message, the SMO reframing of the problem: local governments are central to solve the collective action problem of climate change.

Be it Carbons or Resilient Cities²⁰⁵, the strategy is the same: creating spaces or mechanisms that put in motion ICLEI's discourse and then strive to make them be recognized as efficient and legitimate instruments the global community could use to tackle climate change. The way these tools have been framed carries the essence of the SMO's discursive logic and goes far beyond the simple rhetoric argumentation through discourses and declarations. While previous initiatives have demonstrated that local actors can deliver significant progress, or institutionalize standards of practice, ICLEI had not managed to institutionalize its SMO, its constituents, its tools, or its arenas as legitimate components of the *international* system that addresses global environmental change. In addition, even if originally designed as part of an integrated effort to advocate the role of LGs, CCP and (to some extent) LA21 have progressively lost the close connection that once linked them to the international sphere of environmental negotiations. The renewed approach, however, tries to close this gap in pushing for the institutionalization of mechanisms or forum (not only practices) in a system that is no longer only *international* but *global*. Institutionalization no longer only refers to the recognition of a level of government but the recognition of their mechanisms by various actors: nation-states through the UN system, but also market actors on

²⁰⁴ Beyond the number of participants, the fact that high-level representatives of the various organizations that deal with climate change and its effects were present is backing the argument. Were present inter alia, Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Inga Klevby, Deputy Executive Director, UN Human Settlements Program, Reta Jo Lewis, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's Special Representative for Global Intergovernmental Affairs, US Department of State, Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative of UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, etc. Source: <http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/bonn2010>.

²⁰⁵ Similar to Carbons or Resilient Cities, The EcoMobility Alliance has been launched by ICLEI WS as an endeavour to bring together actors of ecomobility (the concept is difficult to define, could be understood as a mobility that does not rely on fossil fuel) such as bike companies to improve coordination and produce carbon-free institutional and business solutions to the issue of urban mobility.

the global market of urban sustainability. Because the big picture has changed, the UN system, even if still crucial, is no longer the only place to get recognition, to seek institutionalization, and therefore, develop financial resources that sustain the SMO.

Conclusion

At this stage, one thing is obvious: grasping ICLEI in its complexity and diversity is a difficult enterprise. Where the eye should look at? If, in its early years, the SMO is still sufficiently simple in its organizational structure, the picture quickly got more difficult to read with the development of its activities and membership.

The humble effort presented in these pages has tried to unravel the threads of this evolution, tried to understand the process and dynamics at work. Doing so, we are aware that we have traced a cognitive construction of a constellation of facts, events, actors that are determined by a variety of contingencies. This is a narrative that has been proposed, with all the subjectivity of its narrators. The narrative of twenty years that transformed a method of political mobilization linking the local level of government with the big international picture. A method forged in the effervescence of the 1980s and the announcing signs of a tremendous change. This method has been fuzzed with the myth of Irvine by Jeb Brugmann, the craftsman of the social movement organization. For sure ICLEI is not a spontaneous movement; it is a strategic construction that targeted a significant vacuum in leadership in the area of urban sustainability. The relevance of the enterprise, the power of ICLEI tale quickly convinced a large number of actors to support it. From Noel Brown (UNEP) to Maurice Strong (UNCED), the UN system has given a substantive pull to launch the movement. Paradoxically, IULA which was weakened by its internecine competition with UTO, also endorsed the initiative freeing the way to get members on board. Members whose number rose quickly from two hundred to over a thousand. More than anything else, this infatuation has demonstrated the relevancy of the approach, the reality of the movement. An approach based on rigor and pragmatism, reflecting the way local governments were handling on a daily base with increasing pressure on their environmental, economic and social systems. A rigor as a way to prove to skeptics that environmentalism is not fair idealism. From these solid foundations, ICLEI has developed programs that gave the SMO its contemporary face, its status and legitimacy.

Like any other organization, in growing ICLEI has also faced difficulties. The decline of its core international programs interfered with the activities of a World Secretariat affected by its own local context; a period of unrest unfortunately simultaneous to a deep transformation of the global context in particular in the field of sustainability affairs – from the international negotiations to the emergence of a new competitive market. While the environment was changing at a dramatic speed, ICLEI fumbled for some years in aligning its global strategy of action. The episode of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, for instance, shows how ICLEI missed opportunities to confirm its leadership in scaling up its global activities. Though, in the meantime, its movement and the network of offices more closely linked to the evolution on the ground allowed the SMO to preserve its centrality in its field. In spite of some misfortunes, it thus managed to operate smoothly an alignment of its project by slightly renaming the organization and repositioning it globally on the market of urban sustainability – choosing the strategic location of Bonn. ICLEI might never find again an emblematic program that would drive its expansion over a decade, as the silent failure of Local Action 21 suggested there is not anymore any vacuum. But the topic of climate change might be a powerful axis of development, as much for its discursive salience than because of the related activities and resources it might generate. This is where the present draws a curtain on the observation. Today, ICLEI is slowly moving towards a rationalization of its organizational structure as a means to increase its capacity to act strategically and proactively in a context where circles of actors are increasing. Tomorrow, it might manage or not to reach a new stage of institutionalization in setting up global mechanisms like Carbons or forums like Resilient Cities.

In reference to our initial hypothesis, one can say that ICLEI has effectively participated to reframe local environmental problems into global sustainability solutions. Of course, the focus of this document did not really allow to testing this hypothesis at the local level nor measuring the degree of influence of ICLEI in the process. However, the instrumental role it played in setting new standards of practice in the areas of local governance and climate policies, in particular through the provision of technical and discursive tools, is confirming our main hypothesis. ICLEI was, and still is, a strategic construction that is now own by a vast movement of practioners. Regarding our specific

assumptions, the assessment is contrasted. ICLEI has definitely played an important role in supporting its members with expertise and tools. Nevertheless, it has to some extent failed in its normative mission: it did not lead to the construction of a political agenda capable of competing with the neoliberal agenda²⁰⁶. As a consequence the reframing of LGs' role as a solution in the global environmental governance is only partial; even more that the nation states are still demonstrating their will to concentrate the power of decision like the episode of the last days at the COP15 in Copenhagen have suggested. A polycentric approach of global environmental problems is far from becoming the mainstream.

What is the contribution of this Masters' thesis?

To the case of a polycentric approach of global environmental change, this study might contribute in documenting experiences of how such diverse actors as LGs are, can be organized into organizational structures, networks that encourage experiences, learning, and trust building – in reference to Elinor Ostrom's recommendation. It also stressed the role of collective action frames and the huge part myths can play and strived to bring an organizational understanding of how the concept of polycentric governance can be implemented. It is an illustration of one segment of the complex solution to the collective action problem.

To the SMO literature, more than bringing any answers, it raises some theoretical challenge. Indeed, SMOs are usually understood as movements of individuals. Here other organizations played this role through their heads of environmental departments. What is more, these organizations are governments, and governments are not comparable in their actions to individuals. Basically the literature has not yet addressed the case, because of its marginal character, where governmental entities are organizing into large movements – alliances on small scale have been addressed – engaged to some extent into a process of norm construction. Going further, studying such phenomenon could illuminate the process that leads to the emergence of a regime.

²⁰⁶ Brugmann, J. Locating the 'Local Agenda': Preserving Public Interest in the Evolving Urban World. In Marcotullio, P. and Gordon McGranahan (Eds). *Scaling Urban Governance: from Local to Global and Back*. London: Earthscan, 2007, 366 pages.

To ICLEI, the SMO, this discursive effort might bring together the narratives of its two strategists, Jeb and Konrad, with their contradictions, but above all their consistency. The understanding of ICLEI laid down in this document has been deeply influenced by their input. Somehow, I had the chance to directly benefit from it. However, dispersed staff in the world might not have this opportunity. Sharing this story might help in diffusing a strategic understanding of the social movement organization. This understanding is nevertheless limited and would benefit greatly from the input of the other strategists, the regional and national directors, with their specific angles and rationales.

To me, as its author, it certainly helped me to develop my own narrative of the evolution of ICLEI over the last two decades, and beyond that, my own understanding of the big picture and its meaning for the years to come. As I will continue to work for the organization and its movement, this frame is likely to influence the way I will conduct my activities on a daily base.

Nevertheless, this exercise being realized within a short period of time does not reach its full potential. In particular, it could have gained from a more systematic investigation regarding the primary sources. ICLEI archives and especially meetings' minutes (Executive Committees and IOMC of executive directors) could have been searched to illuminate the way discourses are built within the organization, how local orders and interests conflict with global strategy. In the same line, this document is weak in displaying accurate facts: budgets, precise chronology of ICLEI expansion, etc.

In addition, our analysis has focused on the World Secretariat. It served our purpose to observe the big picture of the social movement organization, however, the big picture is made of smaller ones, the regional and national offices and the local governments. Indeed, it would have been of great interest to interview these actors of the SMO as their perspectives might be very different, more rooted in the conduct of concrete projects. Thus, we feel frustrated not to have been able to deconstruct the notion of identity among members that are very different in nature, size and ambitions. In particular, it would have been interesting to observe if the global evolution from a focus on environmental matters towards the broader theme of

sustainability has been indeed mirrored at the local government level by a diffusion of ICLEI's identity to other services than environmental departments and their liaisons. And more generally to understand what is the process that lead a local government to join ICLEI as a member, in a nutshell, who exactly are these members has not really been shown.

The SMO approach and in particular the frame analysis could have been better structured and exploited to let it deploy its full analytical power: from Snow and Benford's perspective on the way collective action frames evolved within the movement and beyond its borders; to Goffman's understanding in approaching the dramaturgy of interactions. Besides, the discussion around the concept of sustainability has not been addressed to the extent it could really enrich the understanding its linkage with ICLEI's collective action frame. Eventually, the debate around the notion of institutionalization could have been better defined and explored further.

In spite of all these weaknesses and biases, we believe that through the study of a rich case, this exercise gives an opportunity to read the evolution of the system called global environmental governance. Above all it characterizes an organizational reality that is often overlooked by scholars while it is the source of many barriers and opportunities to the construction of a collective solution to the collective problem. Personally, it opened a window of hope in times when it is difficult to understand how institutions and actors can address collectively and effectively global environmental change.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AW-GKP	Ad Hoc Working Group on Kyoto Protocol
AW-GLCA	Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action
CBD	UN Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
CFCs	Chlorofluorocarbons
COP	Conference of Parties
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
HEAT	Harmonized Emissions Analysis Tool
ICLEI	International Council for Local environmental Initiatives
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEAP	International Emissions Analysis Protocol
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ISO	International Standardization Organization
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
LG(s)	Local Government(s)
LGMA	Local Governments and Municipal Authorities
NIMBY	“Not In My BackYard”
NWP	Nairobi Work Programme (on adaptation)
SG	(ICLEI) Secretary General
SMO(s)	Social Movement Organization (the singular referring in general to the theoretical approach and the plural to the organization reality)
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments

UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTO	United Towns Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum
WMCCC	World Mayors Council on Climate Change
WS	(ICLEI) World Secretariat

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