

Development Policies & Practices

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Cities Fighting Against Climate Change

How to Build Sustainability at Subnational Level?

Cities are at the core of the international sustainable development agenda and the 2015 Climate Conference in Paris (COP 21). Cities generate 75% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but they are also particularly vulnerable to sudden changes in their natural or socio-economic environment and they provide a relevant level for actions on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. Between now and 2030, the urban population in developing countries should increase from 2 to 4 billion individuals, i.e. more than half of the world's population. GRET has been supporting urban and territorial development in these countries for over 30 years and provides recommendations for the construction of local public action on climate.

Action for climate by local authorities in developing countries depends on numerous external factors:

their room for real manoeuvre in the definition of local policies; adoption and roll-out of a national climate policy in legislative, regulatory and instrumental terms; consistency and coordination of sectoral policies at central level in terms of climate issues; application of the law in areas that impact climate; national and international funding (redistribution systems, specific programmes or calls for projects) and availability of expertise; stability and consistency of tools (carbon compatibility, technical and economic modelling) using methods "imported" from Northern countries that require significant adaptation (e.g. Covenant of Mayors, European Energy Award, ICLEI, etc.).

At subnational level, climate policies require public acceptance and mobilisation of all stakeholders, including internally for local authorities.

★ At subnational level, construction of favourable local authorities and recognition of climate change as a public issue

is a crucial prerequisite. The fight against climate change is often perceived as low priority or contradictory to the "dream" of economic development and modernity. Levers exist to change the perception of issues and legitimise public action, without waiting for climatic events with sometimes tragic consequences to reveal the vulnerability of a region: diagnosis of greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability, public debate via the media, mobilization of civil society, visibility of actions led by central government and international organisations, etc.

Legitimisation, Mobilisation, Political Leadership: the Necessary Factors for Success of Climate Policies

Subnational strategies for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change are necessary to build inclusive, resilient, effective, low-carbon cities. These policies, which have yet to be determined, require coordination of scales and sectors of public action, implementation of planning & decision-making tools incorporating the uncertainties of climatic scenarios and their impacts, and the involvement of a large number of heterogeneous stakeholders.

Founded in 1976, GRET is an international development NGO that has been actively fighting poverty and inequalities on all levels and in a broad range of subjects.

Its professionals provide lasting, innovative solutions for fair development in the field and work to positively influence policy.

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★ **Mobilising, convincing and involving all stakeholders is all the more crucial as local authorities can only act on a limited portion of GHG emissions** in their area, directly (a local authority's emissions rarely exceed 5% of the overall emissions of the region it covers) and indirectly (via coercive policies, the local authority can act on approximately one quarter of the region's emissions). Local coordination is decisive, and especially in contexts where governance is fragmented. It is through processes of awareness raising, consultation, debate and multi-player co-construction that political consensus, commitment and contribution of stakeholders, confidence in local public authorities in a context of uncertainty regarding climatic scenarios and their impacts can be achieved.

★ **Strong political leadership and ownership of issues at all levels within the local authority** is necessary to generate a domino effect among all departments and elected representatives. The necessity to incorporate new constraints and ways of doing things, increased complexity, and competition (real or perceived) between a climate strategy and pre-existing public policies can explain the reticence of elected representatives and departments. Setting up an energy-climate team can make it possible to draw up pertinent programme proposals but it is not enough: "climate" policies are best rolled out when those responsible for them work at an inter-departmental level, have cross-functional facilitation prerogatives and are stakeholders in piloting sectoral and urban planning.

"Climatisation" of Policies or Strategic Planning with a Climate Objective?

For cities in developing countries, climate issues are increasing previous vulnerability. Many of the necessary adaptations pertain to existing requirements and shortcomings in local public policies (informal urbanisation, spatial segregation, fragmented governance, poor project management, etc.). **Adaptation is a crucial and primordial vector for social and economic development policies that are inclusive and sustainable.**

National public institutions and authorities have developed approaches enabling the definition of climate strategies taking into account inter-

action between environmental, economic, social and cultural dimensions in conjunction with local sectoral policies, and urban planning and management. In France, for example, ADEME developed the "Territorial Energy Climate Plan".

However, in cities in developing countries, public institutions, decentralisation, governance and urban & sectoral policies are often not mature enough and the inclusion of climate issues in public debate is often insufficient to adopt such global and systemic approaches. So it seems more realistic and more effective for these cities to adopt **progressive approaches by including the climate issue in existing sectoral and urban policies** (urban planning concepts, mobility plans, housing development plans, waste management, etc.). This exercise can lead to a re-examination of shortcomings in urban planning, land management, decent housing, transport, etc., and can highlight the inherent limits of sectoral and urban policies themselves, as well as the necessity to conduct structural reforms. Demonstrative climate projects and actions (waste management, public lighting, air pollution, transport) that have tangible effects on people's daily lives make it possible to quickly embody the opportunities relating to these issues, to convince local stakeholders and populations. For authorities that have already done this, a planning approach with a climate objective makes it possible to strengthen the overall consistency of objectives set in terms of climate, their operational roll-out and an increase in the visibility and legibility of a global policy.

The question of resources is unavoidable for local authorities that must succeed in combining the adoption of specific budgets for facilitating their climate policy and gradually incorporating costs relating to this strategy into all sectoral and urban policies. The availability of external national and international funding can, from the outset, reduce competition between public policies and promote their integration.

★ In the context of the 2015 Climate Conference in Paris (COP 21), local authority networks are asking for cities in "developing countries to have easier access to international fundings such as the Green fund" (World Summit Climate & Territories Declaration in Lyon, 2 July 2015). **It is necessary to ensure that the most fragile regions and rural regions also benefit from international funding.** Climate change accentuates uprooting, exclusion of farmers and unemployment for billions of rural inhabitants, generating social upheaval and pressure

on cities: recognition of the interdependency between urban and rural areas is proof of the need for territorial development approaches rather than just planning for urban areas.

★ **There is an urgent need to fund adaptation to climate change in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**, which are often the most vulnerable to climate change and the least responsible for the challenges they will have to face. But public resources remain way below estimated requirements: according to the Canfin/Grandjean report, resources cur-

rently stand at 4 to 5 billion euros per year for requirements that are ten times higher. Funding approaches in current debates are largely focused on technical questions pertaining to complex structural tools and the use of private funding or loans from international lenders, which are not suited or accessible to LDCs. This manner of dealing with issues overshadows the question of differences in the responsibilities of societies in climate change, and differences in the capacity for action and adaptation according to regions. Suitable mechanisms must be put in place for LDCs, to support adaptation and the preventive integration of resilience as far upstream as possible.

CLIMATE ACTIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY AT SUBNATIONAL LEVEL¹

In their upstream phase, climate strategies include a series of diagnoses (carbon footprint, water balance, vulnerability diagnoses, ecological structure) and prospective studies (development of a low carbon economy), based on which action plans comprising actions for adaptation & mitigation, awareness raising, education, institutional & organizational adaptation, and production & distribution of knowledge are defined.

Examples drawn from a study entitled “Urban projects with climate impacts: five case studies”, show that climate actions also solve socio-economic issues.

In terms of **mitigation**, we have the example of transition from gas to biomass energy for urban heating in Nantes, optimisation of waste management and development of clean public transport in Agadir and Lima, public lighting and renewable energies in Agadir and Da Nang. In terms of **adaptation**: urban agriculture and renewal of vulnerable informal districts in Lima, improvement of housing resilience to storms in Da Nang, and floor risk management and resilience in London, Nantes and Lima. These actions can aim to optimise the use of regional resources, short food and supply circuits, development of renewable energies, minimization of urban sprawl and diffuse suburbanisation, the development of a circular economy, and protection of agricultural and natural zones.

Recommendations

With a view to building local public action on climate, GRET is defending the creation of participative planning and decision-making tools suited to local contexts, grant schemes that give priority to adaptation of regions in LDCs and the recognition of the interdependency of urban and rural areas by promoting territorial development approaches.

GRET recommends that local authorities in developing countries:

★ **Implement participative territorial planning and prospective approaches with a climate objective or territorial and sectoral plans that include climate**, targeting first and foremost improvement of resilience and reduction of vulnerability for the most vulnerable groups. These schemes must contribute to sustainable, inclusive development and balanced fair territorial development for urban and rural areas alike.

★ **Conduct ambitious participative processes** for the construction of local public action in the area of climate, i.e. mobilise, convince and involve all stakeholders in the region over the long term.

GRET recommends that the Cop 21 parties, national governments and funders:

★ **Support local authorities in their fight against climate change**, via appropriate legal framework, national policies, decentralisation of skills and funding of technical assistance.

★ **Consult local authorities** to draw up national policies and international programmes to fight against climate change.



1. Examples drawn from the study entitled “Urban projects with climate impacts: five case studies”.

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- ★ **Provide direct access to the Green Fund for local authorities in developing countries** in order to fund diagnoses and territorial planning approaches with a climate objective or the incorporation of climate into sectoral and territorial plans.
- ★ **Guarantee sufficient funding for adaptation** to climate change in LDCs via the funding instrument and implementation of channels & procedures suited to stakeholders and local authorities over the period of time necessary to experiment innovative models (i.e. 10 to 15 years).
- ★ **Develop and fund action research** when developing tools for climate-oriented territorial planning, decision-making and knowledge production. ●



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Part 1 of this note and the boxed text are based on the cross-analysis of experiences with strategies incorporating a climate objective in five cities: London (United Kingdom), Nantes (France), Da Nang (Vietnam), Lima (Peru) and Agadir (Morocco), conducted by I Care & Consult and GRET for the AFD (see above bibliography).

GRET is solely responsible for part 2 and the recommendations.

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