Received: 6 October 2021 | Revised: 24 February 2022 | Accepted: 27 April 2022

DOI: 10.1111/polp.12496

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The drive to sustainability: A way in which local initiatives diffuse internationally

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Abstract

This article examines how local initiatives can gain international visibility and recognition as well as how they can diffuse to other cities. It explores the leadership of the mayors of Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland, but also how there were specific contexts that favored the transformations of these cities. The work uses Finnemore and Sikkink's norm "life cycle" and Gilardi's diffusion models to explain how local initiatives and policies were promoted using the C40 network as a platform to diffuse practices on climate action and sustainable development. The research undertaken points to a similar pattern through which local policies get international resonance: after initial leadership arises at the local level to promote local policies, international visibility is gained through the winning of awards and the promotion of such policies within the C40. Learning, emulation, and competition are identified as mechanisms through which diffusion occurs.

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KEYWORDS
C40, cities, state, and local politics/government, constructivism, energy efficiency, environmental governance, norm diffusion, leadership, and mayors, norm life cycle, sustainable mobility, transnational municipal networks, urban development

The role of cities and transnational municipal networks (TMNs) has been widely discussed in world and global cities literature as part of the reconfiguration of the Westphalian order that has resulted from globalization (Bouteligier, 2016; Brenner, 2004; Castells, 2010; Curtis, 2016; Friedman, 1986; Sassen, 2001; Taylor, 2004). A domain in which such importance has become particularly evident is environmental governance. Despite that, in recent years, cities have gained substantive visibility at the international level, the growing importance of cities is far from new. Cities and towns have played a central role economically, politically, and culturally in all human societies and preceded nation states by some 5000 years (Blank, 2006; Ljungkvist, 2016).

The role of cities in the fight against climate change and in promoting sustainable development has increased dramatically in the last two decades. Indeed, cities, and how they can improve their policies to face these challenges, have become a priority for global sustainability (Castán Broto, 2017; Evans, 2019). The necessary involvement of cities in global sustainability has even led to the inclusion of a specific goal within the 2030 Agenda, which is a plan of 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) with 169 targets adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 to promote sustainable development worldwide. This specific goal is called SDG 11—Sustainable Cities and Communities—and urges an increase in the number of cities that actively fight against climate change and in favor of sustainability.

Popular references to the increasing importance of cities in climate politics usually include statements regarding their high level of energy consumption and their contribution to greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), which account for up to 80 and 70 percent, respectively (UN Habitat, 2019). Another figure that explains the relevance of cities in tackling environmental problems is the rapid increase in the number of megacities—those with more than ten million inhabitants—in the last two decades, from ten in 1990 to 33 in 2018 (United Nations, 2018)—compared to the more than 140 states that have less than ten million inhabitants. Undoubtedly, this makes cities essential actors both in the fight against climate change as well as in the promotion of sustainable development and explains why in the last years cities have been identified as having the power to reduce climate emissions, more so than national governments (Gordon & Johnson, 2017).

The emergence of transnational challenges or, rather, the globalization of local problems, has served as a window of opportunity for cities to participate in global governance, increasing the number of actors actively involved in international climate action. The internationalization of mayors, as Acuto (2016) puts it, is not purely a bottom-up reaction but the result of the need and the will to deal with a challenging global context filled with transnational concerns such as climate change, refugees, poverty, food insecurity, among others on a never-ending list. In relation to this idea, Castán Broto (2017) notes how urban governance is a vehicle not only for addressing climate change issues or a way to gain influence in global politics, but also a means to build new forms of authority, for instance, putting the emphasis on participatory, cooperation, and people-oriented approaches. This is made possible by the ability of cities to better cooperate between themselves, the swiftness with which they can identify the needs of citizens, and their higher level of pragmatism in comparison with higher levels of government (Hoornweg et al., 2011).

The role of cities in environmental governance has also been studied by urban academics (Bulkeley & Kern, 2006; Castán Broto, 2017), particularly remarking the significant role that individual policymakers, political parties, and research institutions can play in making climate change a priority within local politics (Bulkeley, 2010; Bulkeley & Schroeder, 2009; Shreurs & Tiberghien, 2007). Other studies have focused on the analysis of transnational municipal networks (Bansard et al., 2017; Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004; Bouteligier, 2016; Domorenok et al., 2020) or on learning within TMNs

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(Gordon, 2020; Hakelberg, 2014; Lee & van de Meene, 2012). Moreover, there are authors that underline that the focus on cities as the unit of analysis for climate change action overshadows the long history of global governance on environment and development (Castán Broto, 2020). Indeed, literature examining or comparing best practices and strategies in specific cities (Carmin et al., 2012; Gilbert, 2008; Siders, 2017; Solly, 2016) has contributed to magnifying local actions that may always have a local impact but not always resonate on the international level.

Previous studies have also considered TMNs especially suitable to help municipalities address transnational concerns (Fenton & Busch, 2016). TMNs such as ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), and the European Union's Covenant of Mayors emerged in the early 1990s and mid-2000s to share knowledge among local and regional governments on how to drive sustainable development as well as climate and energy actions at the city level. Research on these networks has highlighted their potential to give cities access to resources, technical expertise, and knowledge to address local problems that have an international dimension (Davidson et al., 2019; Domorenok et al., 2020; Toly, 2008). Participation in TMNs—characterized by non-hierarchical structures and the direct implementation of decisions by its members (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009)—can be considered a sign of cities' increasing interest in playing a role in global governance and gaining prestige and leadership in relation to climate action (Bansard et al., 2017; Bulkeley, 2010; Bulkeley & Schroeder, 2009; Domorenok et al., 2020).

The capacity of TMNs to spread climate policy innovation and action through diffusion among cities has been previously examined (Hakelberg, 2014), particularly in both the ICLEI, created in the 1990s and in which more than 2500 local and regional governments participate (see Fenton & Busch, 2016), and in the C40, launched in 2005 and currently connecting 97 of the world's greatest cities to step up climate action (see Lee & van de Meene, 2012; Rashidi & Patt, 2018). Published studies have identified an apparent existence of two tiers of cities within TMNs: pioneer cities, which are active within the network; and passive cities, which are those that do not significantly change their behavior after accession (Hakelberg, 2014; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009).

The position of this article is that the internationalization of local practices—whether they are norms, policies, or ideas—could not have occurred without the strong leadership and sound implementation of climate and sustainability policies at the city level, which shows that cities are not just spectators in global politics but actors therein, who want to gain traction and contribute to solving global challenges, even if only a few cities succeed in attaining a truly international profile. The study contributes to the understanding of how initiatives implemented at the local level transitioned to the international domain and gained visibility and support within the C40 network. The work establishes a link between the implementation of climate and sustainability policies as well as the existence of strong leadership at the local level on the one hand, and the increasing visibility of cities at the international level on the other.

While there is previous research on policy learning through the C40 climate network (Gordon, 2020; Lee & van de Meene, 2012), the research undertaken applies the norm "life cycle" proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) to three very well-known cases in the urban literature: Bogotá (Colombia), Stockholm (Sweden), and Portland, Oregon (United States). Although the roles of these three cities have long been studied as examples of how to foster sustainable transport, how to develop sustainable neighborhoods, and how to achieve more sustainable energy, respectively, the current study seeks to identify whether those policies at the local level have been echoed in other cities that participate in the C40, of which Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland are members. It examines how local initiatives have been diffused internationally, specifically as the result of the effort of local governments' representatives and the participation of these cities in the C40, which has been used as a platform to promote norms and policies and to gain visibility among peers; that is, the C40 has been used as a stage to spread policies and initiatives that were first adopted at the local level.

The present study also seeks to contribute to the learning literature by empirically identifying some drivers and characteristics of the concept of policy diffusion as defined by Gilardi (2016), thus contributing to enriching the understanding of cities' interactions at the international level. Gilardi's

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policy diffusion model can be considered one of the two forms of explanation for the adoption of new policies and ideas at the local level, as explained by Berry and Berry (2007), who identify both internal determinants and diffusion models as important to understand how innovations are adopted at the local level. While it is the internal determinants that could explain the adoption of new policies in Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland in the first place, it is the diffusion models that could explain the transmission of those policies to other cities. Whereas the identification of internal determinants, as explained by the literature on policy processes, helps to explain how factors such as economic, social, political characteristics, or the personality of local leaders lead to the adoption of new policies, diffusion models help explain how ideas spread from one city to others.

The cases of Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland were chosen because each of them has pioneered some of the most advanced projects to improve sustainability at the local level from different angles: transport, urban development, and energy efficiency, respectively. In addition, each implementation process has been different, but the three of them have attained excellence in promoting sustainability at the local level. The three cities have also received international attention by winning awards. Furthermore, the three cities examined are on three different continents, which can help identify similar patterns in the diffusion of local practices regardless of geographical location (north–south) and the level of development of the city. The three cases are relevant because of either being pioneers in finding a solution to specific environmental challenges (i.e., urban transport, urban development, and sustainable energy) or by engaging them with unique methods, such as the use of novel technologies in sustainable planning (Toly, 2008).

In addition to referring to academic literature on the C40, norm diffusion, policy processes, and leadership, information on the three cities has been gathered from the C40 network itself. Several documents from the network (i.e., guides and reports) have been analyzed in search of evidence of the diffusion of local practices. Part of the information on the selection of case studies has been provided by C40 staff reached by email. In addition, all the case studies and entries on the C40's website and blog where Bogotá, Portland, and Stockholm are mentioned between 2011 and 2020 (a total of 72 times) have been examined. All of the documents have been clustered into categories (e.g., transport, awards, participation in C40 events, interview with city representatives) to allow for better identification of the context in which the cities were mentioned.

The article proceeds as follows: after the introduction, I position the research within a policy process and norm diffusion framework to explain the cascade of norms and policies through leadership and the participation of cities in TMNs. The next part focuses on the link between leadership at the local level and the visibility of cities at the international level. This section highlights the role played by mayors in Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland, in the internationalization of those cities. Next I examine how the winning of awards and the participation of those cities in the C40 network have contributed to international visibility and to policy diffusion among cities. The article finishes with a discussion and conclusion section, where evidence of diffusion is identified.

POLICY PROCESSES AND NORM DIFFUSION

As seen above, literature on urban governance and TMNs is vast. In particular, the literature on how norms, policies, and ideas influence nation-state behavior (see for instance Bearce & Bondanella, 2007; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Graham et al., 2013; or Gilardi, 2016) provides the opportunity of understanding the flow of norms and ideas between cities, and from cities to higher levels of governance. Understanding that flow and what Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) described as the norm "life cycle" is the focus of this work. However, literature on policy processes is also useful to understand how decisions are adopted at the local level in the first place.

Literature on policy processes has identified the existence of dozens of actors including interest groups, governmental agencies, and researchers at the different stages of policy making that would help explain policy change in the medium and long term (Sabatier, 2007). Some of the theoretical

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frameworks that explain how all those interests and actors influence policy process include the multiple-streams framework, which suggests that there are windows of opportunity that policy entrepreneurs can use to promote policy change (Zahariadis, 2007); the advocacy coalition framework, which focuses on the interaction of different advocacy coalitions in reforming policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007); the policy diffusion models that explain the adoption of new policies and initiatives (Berry & Berry, 2007); and the institutional rational choice model, which focuses on how institutional rules alter the behavior of intendedly rational individuals moved by material self-interest (Sabatier, 2007).

Although all these authors have studied policy processes in states and diffusion mechanisms among states, in this article I apply them to cities with the understanding that diffusion does not occur only between states but also between other relevant units such as cities (Gilardi, 2012).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) introduced the norm "life cycle," explaining three steps through which a norm promoted at the local level can be institutionalized at the international level. In the first stage of the cycle, there are two common elements in the creation of successful norms: norm entrepreneurs and the organizational platforms from which they act to promote their norms and seek the support from other actors to endorse them. In a second stage, norm acceptance happens through a cascade effect that takes place during an active process of international socialization (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). In the third and final stage, there is an internationalization process in which norms may become so widely accepted that they are taken for granted. In at least the first two stages, the role of norm entrepreneurs is crucial for the emergence of the norm. For the purpose of this work, norm entrepreneurs are defined as actors with strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community who attempt to convince others to embrace new norms. They promote ideas and energize the diffusion process, participating on a personal basis and investing time and energy in the process of innovation (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Mintrom, 1997; Timmermans et al., 2014). Organizational platforms are used to promote norms, and those platforms can be organizations, networks, or international events (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Another strand of the literature has focused on policy transfer and diffusion (Gilardi, 2012; Marsh & Sharman, 2009; Meseguer & Gilardi, 2009). Here I use the definition of policy diffusion put forward by Simmons and others (2006) and adapt it to cities, since it is one that can be used for the vast majority of processes that political scientists are interested in. Gilardi (2016) points out that "policy diffusion occurs when government policy decisions in a given [city] are systematically conditioned by prior policy choices made in another [city] (sometimes mediated by the behavior of international organizations or even private actors or organizations)." Most authors agree on the existence of at least four major mechanisms through which policy transfer and diffusion occur: learning, coercion, competition, and emulation—also known as mimicry (Dobbin et al., 2007; Gilardi, 2016; Marsh & Sharman, 2009).

Learning will be understood here as a process whereby the experience of others supplies relevant information on the outcomes of a given policy (Meseguer & Gilardi, 2009), usually in situations characterized by complexity, failure, anomaly, and new information (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001). Although few studies see coercion as a leading mechanism (Marsh & Sharman, 2009), it is important to recognize that coercion may come from different actors and can be exercised through the manipulation of information or expertise, as well as the use of incentives to direct action (Dobbin et al., 2007). Competition occurs when units react to or anticipate one another in an attempt to attract or retain capital, investment, or other resources (Gilardi, 2016). Finally, emulation entails copying the models and norms of foreign leaders that are perceived by others as being advanced, progressive, or morally praiseworthy (Marsh & Sharman, 2009).

In this work, I focus on what Gilardi calls "diffusion multipliers" (Gilardi, 2016) within the TMNs. In his work, Gilardi (2016) noted the potential of policy diffusion to accelerate policy change and how "diffusion multipliers" can indirectly influence multiple jurisdictions by only directly influencing one. Following Toly (2008), I assume two things: first, that the representatives of the cities examined are norm/policy entrepreneurs, and second, that those examined in this research are making use of TMNs

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as diffusion multipliers of policy, norms, and techniques to other members of the TMNs. Thus, by disseminating knowledge about urban climate change practices to other cities, they can contribute to shaping the norms and practices of other actors (Lin, 2018; Toly, 2008), and therefore have a greater international visibility.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY

Previous research has shown that climate change responsibility lies at the highest level of city governance (Lee & van de Meene, 2012). Although some argue that leadership is the most essential responsibility for public officials (Han, 2008), the context in which they govern has an equally important weight in the power they exercise (Nye, 2008). An example of this is the need to adopt decisions during emergencies such as pandemics, floods, droughts, or wildfires, which can give an international scope to the management of local authorities. For instance, the wildfires in California in 2007 let Governor Schwarzenegger show his leadership (Han, 2008), while others have used purely their determination to adopt unpopular measures in situations that are not obviously urgent to the public eye, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in city centers, as in the case of Anne Hidalgo in Paris (Nositer, 2019; Vock, 2020). In the three cases explained below, leadership is connected to charismatic, proactive leadership, and the conjunction of internal determinants at the local level, but also to the visibility of cities internationally.

Bogotá

The city of Bogotá is often regarded as an example of sustainable mobility by urban literature. The administrations of former mayors Enrique Peñalosa (1998–2001 and 2016–2019) and Antanas Mockus (1995–1997 and 2001–2003) are considered to have been key in Bogotá's policy advancement of urban innovation (Kalandides, 2011; Montezuma, 2005). Peñalosa put into place what was later regarded as one of the most innovative and efficient bus rapid transit systems in the world (Ardila, 2004; Cervero, 2013; Ferbrache, 2019; Kent, 2016) and initiated the construction of more than 300 km of bicycle lanes that ran through both low-income and wealthy areas as a way of promoting integration. Between 1998 and 2003 urban planning became central to the city: public parks were designed, the use of cars was limited, the Transmilenio—a large bus rapid transit system—was developed, sidewalks were repaired and created, the use of bicycles was encouraged and the necessary infrastructure created, public libraries were built in the periphery, and several other environmental measures were launched (Kalandides, 2011; Martin & Ceballos, 2005; Montezuma, 2005). All these changes in a single city within such a short period of time would have been difficult to imagine without strong leadership and determination—including to face strong opposition from citizens (Dalsgaard, 2009; Montezuma, 2005)—both from Mockus and Peñalosa. Both former mayors were elected as independent candidates and with very strong opinions and programs on how to modulate citizen participation and how to regulate public spaces, respectively (Dalsgaard, 2009; Pizano, 2003; Williams Montoya, 2014). While Mockus was surrounded by academics in his first mandate to promote the so-called "citizens' culture," Peñalosa chose a group of the best Colombian professionals to transform the city. Both of them included women and young people, moving from a clientelist scheme to a much more ethical and professional way of working (Montezuma, 2005). The physical change of the city would not have been possible during Peñalosa's government without the efforts of previous mayors, Mockus Antanas and Jaime Castro, who worked to increase tax revenues, reduce the operating costs of the administration, and make the mayor less dependent on the city council (Montezuma, 2005). These previous conditions led the way to gathering funds from the national government and the United Nations Development Program to transform the city. Although all sources point to clear leadership by Peñalosa in that transformation, there was also an effort to attract citizen support for his initiatives through different public consultations (Pizano, 2003).

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Determined leadership also helps explain advancement from the local to the international. Peñalosa and his team traveled around the world to publicize the virtues and basic functioning of the new massive urban transport system to other governments (Gilbert, 2008), which likely made it more possible for Bogotá to receive global attention from policy makers and academics in other countries. This led to the quick extension of the Transmilenio model to other Colombian cities such as Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Cartagena, and other countries like Guatemala, Chile, Mexico, and Argentina (Mejía-Dugand et al., 2012), and turned the Transmilenio into a profitable business model with Colombia selling articulated buses to other cities in Latin America (Gilbert, 2008).

Stockholm

Among many other things, Stockholm has attracted special attention in academic and specialized media for the promotion of sustainable urbanization and for being a leader in the development of a green economy (Floater et al., 2013). A very well-known example is the neighborhood of Hammarby Sjöstad, a case that has served as an inspiration for other cities worldwide (China Development Bank Capital, 2015; Energy Cities, 2008; OECD, 2013). This area of the city is an example of how to transform an industrial land into an attractive residential area, reduce energy and clean water consumption, make water and sewage as clean and efficient as possible with the use of technology, as well as reduce transport needs and stimulate community feeling and ecological responsibility among residents (Fränne, 2007; Poldermans, 2005).

In the particular case of the so-called Hammarby model, high ambitions and political leadership at all levels of the administration have been deemed key in the development of this area of Stockholm, with politicians being even more ambitious than planners and pursuing ideas that were branded as unattainable at the time (Larsson, 2013). The Hammarby model has been portrayed internationally as an example of a "sustainable neighborhood," "one of the world's most successful urban renewal districts," "one of the world's highest profile examples of Sustainable City Development," and "an exemplary sustainable district," both within international networks (Energy Cities, 2008) and in the academic literature (Fränne, 2007; Kasioumi, 2011; Poldermans, 2005; Solly, 2016).

Behind the successful portrayal of Stockholm as a green city there is a strong role of the local authorities in marketing the city as environmentally friendly and as a hub for companies developing clean technologies (Larsson, 2013). An example of this can be found in 2006, when 30 municipalities joined the Stockholm Business Alliance, a partnership dedicated to promoting the city as the "Capital of Scandinavia." This brand has been the main vehicle for uniting municipalities behind a common message and strategy that has contributed to strengthening the international position of Stockholm (OECD, 2015). Carl Cederschiöld, who was the mayor of Stockholm between 1991–1994 and 1998–2020, also pointed to the environmental awareness among citizens and local politicians, that was strengthened with the hosting of the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 and the later United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Río de Janeiro in 1992. This growing environmental awareness accelerated the widespread acceptance of sustainable development in Stockholm as a key policy goal (Floater et al., 2013).

Particularly during the planning of Hammarby Sjöstad, there were very high ambitions and a strong cooperation between the local government, investors, and environmental organizations (Paschou & Metaxas, 2013). The goal of celebrating the 2004 Olympic Games provided a chance for all actors to promote the latest planning and building practices and to submit the first ever Olympic bid explicitly focused on the environmental impacts of organizing such a large-scale event (Floater et al., 2013). The environmental requirements and the high material and building standards for the development of this area were very tough, partly due to the power of the green party in the city council (Larsson, 2013). However, when the Olympic Games bid was lost, those goals were kept and the development project became very attractive to developers that wanted to be associated with this already green-marketed area (Paschou & Metaxas, 2013).

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Portland

Portland, Oregon is another classic example of a city that has long worked to become more sustainable. In 1979 the city adopted the Portland, Oregon Energy Conservation Policy, for which it received national acclaim (Noggle, 1980). In 1990, the city established the commitment to increasing energy efficiency by 10% by the year 2000 as a way of promoting a sustainable energetic future (City of Portland, 1990), and in 1993 Portland became one of the first cities in the world to address climate change and to start using an inventory of its carbon dioxide emissions (Rutland & Aylett, 2008). In 2011, the city adopted a plan that included the reduction of carbon emissions to 50% below 1990 levels, the covering of 33% of the city in tree canopy or the design of greenways and corridors to connect people, water, and wildlife, all of it by 2035 (City of Portland, 2011). In June 2017, when former President Trump declared that the United States would withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the Portland city council unanimously voted to adopt 100% renewable energy targets that would be later used as a model in clean energy campaigns for organizations like Climate Solutions, Sierra Club, or 350.org (CSE, 2018). Among the main goals of the City of Portland's 2015 Climate Action Plan to be met by 2030 are the reduction by 25% of the total energy use of all buildings built before 2010, the achievement of zero net greenhouse gas emissions in all new buildings and homes, and the supplying of 50% of all energy used in building from renewable sources.

Strong leadership and political continuation in the sustainable development patterns of Portland have been regarded as central in drawing attention to the city (Irazábal, 2005). Former mayors Neil Goldschmidt (1972–1979) and Vera Katz (1993–2005) have been identified as central agents in the sustainable development of the city, in the adoption of smart growth metropolitan policies, and the promotion of transparency and civic engagement (Irazábal, 2005; Sanger, 2008). Mayor Katz, who governed the city for 12 years, saw the reduction of GHG emissions as an opportunity to lower energy bills for residents and business at the same time, thus reinvigorating the economy during a time when unemployment was rising (Slavin & Snyder, 2011). Mayors Goldschmidt and Katz each had a long-term planning program, both which were supported by planners, urban designers, and architects to revitalize some parts of the city. They were carried out through public/private collaborations in which the private sector provided most of the financing while strong local and regional agencies supported the projects (Irazábal, 2005). Changes at the local level in this case would be difficult to understand without also considering the role of the federal government in encouraging residential energy retrofits in Portland through public-private partnerships to become more energy efficient (Rode et al., 2013).

In the three cases above, internal factors such as leadership, finance, regulation, and partnership-building are key to understanding the success of these experiences. In all three there was a top-down vision without which it would have been difficult to implement objectives, plans, and policies in a way that allowed these cities to be considered leaders at some point. Indeed, literature on leadership has found that political commitment and sustained leadership are related to achieving high levels of management capacity, if not results (Behn, 2004; Sanger, 2008). Literature on policy entrepreneurs suggests that transformational leaders are more able to persuade, influence, and mobilize others in pursuing policy change (Mintrom, 1997; Timmermans et al., 2014). Moreover, in the eyes of some authors, in order to drive proactive climate and urban development policies, cities need strong political leadership and tenacity (Carmin et al., 2012; Floater et al., 2013; Swedish Government Inquiries, 2013), and in the three cases examined, these important characteristics can be identified. The cases examined show strong determination from local leaders to transform and develop some areas of the cities, but also a continuation of those projects by later administrations and the creation of partnerships to continue developing similar projects in other parts of the cities.

In the case of Stockholm, after the building of the eco-district in Hammarby, the city council developed the eco-district in the Stockholm Royal Seaport, which is considered to be a clean technology demonstrator project—for instance, with a target for limiting per capita water consumption to 100 liters per day—implemented with public and private partnerships (Floater et al., 2013). The city

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of Portland also promoted different projects to continue increasing the sustainability and reduce GHG emissions within the city, like the eco-districts, neighborhoods focused on carbon neutral buildings; zero carbon transportation; green infrastructure; and compact, complete neighborhoods—also known as "20-minute neighborhoods" (Bennett, 2009). In the case of Bogotá, Antana's second mandate consolidated the reforms undertaken by Peñalosa and extended the Transmilenio to other parts of the city. Indeed, Peñalosa's administration supported Antanas' second candidacy in exchange for this public promise to carry out the huge development plans (Dalsgaard, 2009).

The cases outlined above show the influence that leaders can have on the international promotion of local sustainable policies, which is consistent with what Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) identified as the figure of the "norm entrepreneur," a key element in the construction of cognitive frames that create alternative perceptions of appropriateness and interest. In all cases, as some authors specify, there can be entrepreneurship even if their actions are not explicitly designed to persuade anyone (Toly, 2008). They are also in line with those of Sabatier and Weible (2007, p. 192) on advocacy coalition, that assumes that policy makers have strong convictions and are motivated to translate them into actual policy, and that for those coalitions to have any prospect of success, policy participants must seek allies, shares resources, and develop complementary strategies (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 196).

The mode of leadership identified in these three cities, specific to the role of mayor, falls under what the literature calls "transformational leadership," characterized by a high degree of charisma and/or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and a future-oriented vision that motivates and persuades others to embrace innovation (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Mumford et al., 2008; Timmermans et al., 2014). Former mayors Peñalosa and Mockus in Bogotá and Vera Katz in Portland were very charismatic leaders with a clear vision of how the city could develop. However, leadership in cities is rarely exercised—and maintained in time—without the support of the city government, its administration, and other internal factors, and it is usually a combination of transformational, pragmatic, transactional, and co-creational leadership that explains climate leadership and urban climate governance (Hofstad & Vedeld, 2021). Indeed, coordination between different departments—urban planning, environment, taxes, or transport—and local private organizations seems essential to ensure the long-term implementation of climate and sustainability initiatives.

Therefore, a mix of leadership and cooperation that joins city council staff, private developers, and other stakeholders in decision-making processes (as demonstrated in Stockholm and Portland) could help explain the continuity of policies beyond a particular mayor's mandate.

AWARDS AND C40 TO DIFFUSE AND GAIN RECOGNITION

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) identified the use of organizational platforms as a key element in the internationalization of norms. Norm entrepreneurs would use these platforms to promote norms and secure the support of other actors (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). In this article, the organizational platform from which mayors would promote their initiatives and policies implemented at the local level is the C40 network and other organizations that contribute to publicize and legitimize the policies adopted through awards and rankings. With or without intentionality (Toly, 2008), TMNs would serve as the speaker, amplifying such policies, which, in a later stage, could foster a process of socialization via a cascade effect and thus its institutionalization. It is in this second stage of the norm life cycle that policy diffusion in its various forms could be identified.

While participating in the C40 has been identified as a way to gain political visibility, authority, and legitimacy in cities (Gordon, 2020), it is difficult to point to one specific reason why these local actors may want to share their experiences within the network. Previous research has found that, while cities in northern countries are keener on sharing their work and would have as a motivation "the widespread recognition from sharing their experiences" (e.g., Stockholm), southern global cities would be more driven to participate in these networks by the need for funding or technical assistance (Attström et al., 2016). In the cases of Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland, local leaders' intention was

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to address local challenges, yet they ended up gaining international relevance in urban transport, energy, or sustainable urbanization. But the mere adoption of those policies does not grant cities a direct international profile. There are authors that point to the fact that in some cities, branding was not an initial intention of climate policies, but emerged in the aftermath of successful projects (Busch & Anderberg, 2015).

Cities that want to gain recognition tend to voice their local policies at the international level by sharing their experiences at international conferences or through transnational networks, and also by making efforts to appear in national and international rankings and applying for awards to have their efforts recognized internationally. While awards for outstanding achievements have been found to help in the acceleration of imitation by other cities (Hakelberg, 2014), international recognition in any form can also be a way of strengthening citizens' support of local policies.

Below are examples of how the specific policies examined above have traveled from the local to the international level and how participation in the C40 network, the winning of prizes, and appearances in rankings have contributed to giving a local practice international visibility and have acted as diffusion multipliers, reaching other cities indirectly through the recognition given by these organizations. Good practices shared in the C40 usually include a summary, the results, the reasons for success, and a reference of when and why a city might adopt those practices, along with elements that the cities might consider before its adoption or what benefits they can expect from implementing those initiatives (see for instance C40, 2016a, 2016b). This benchmarking, authors agree, can give cities the opportunity to compare their current situation to that of other cities, learn policy strategies and targets from other cities, more effectively prioritize urban infrastructure project funding, and build collaborative city networks (Acuto et al., 2021).

Bogotá

A rainfall of prizes and awards were given to Bogotá after the implementation of the Transmilenio as a sustainable urban transport policy. Such awards include the special recognition from the United Nations Development Program in 2002, the World Bank Urban Forum in 2005 for its public governance practices, the Stockholm Partnership for Sustainable Cities, the Stockholm Challenge Award in 2000 for its sustainable transport solutions (Ardila & Menckhoff, 2002; Eslava, 2018), and the UNESCO's City of Peace 2002–2003 for its "true urban conviviality" (Kugel, 2006).

Bogotá has been visible on the C40 network's website and blog at least 27 times between 2011 and 2020. This has happened in the form of a case study due to the winning of an award or because of an interview with the mayor or other city representatives (see Table 1). Half of Bogotá's appearances on the C40's website have been related to its transport system in the city, thus reinforcing the international vision of Bogotá as an example of sustainable mobility. In all those cases, for instance, it has been highlighted how the Transmilenio system contributed to reducing travel time by 32% or decreasing accident rates by 90% (in 2011), how the investment in cycling projects resulted in an increase in the use of the bike (in 2019), or how the city planned to extend its bus rapid transit system (in 2020) (see Appendix 1).

An example of how Bogotá continued leading the promotion of urban transport within the C40 group is found in one of the study cases shared in 2015, in which both Bogotá and London appear as leaders in stepping up the hybrid bus market by getting 24 cities to join the Clean Bus Declaration to collectively prove to the manufacturer the need for this type of transport (C40, 2015).

Bogotá has also been tagged in the C40 blog 15 times. On eight occasions the blog entry is related to Bogotá's transport, on two occasions it informs on the winning of an award in urban transportation, and in three entries there are interviews with the mayor or other city council representatives. In the other blog entries, the city is tagged either because it is hosting a meeting or because it is named together with other cities for various purposes.

Policy makers in Bogotá regard the C40 network as a platform to promote the city as one with inspirational solutions, to learn from others, and to gain access to financing (Attström et al., 2016).

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TABLE 1 Times Bogotá has been a case study on C40's website or has been tagged in the C40's blog

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	2020	Total
Bogotá as a case study										
Transport	2				2			1	1	6
Energy					1	1				2
Waste						1				1
Health						1				1
Water						1				1
Green areas								1		1
Tagged in the blog										
Transport		2	3	1	1		1			8
City representative (interview, statement, initiatives)				1		2				3
Awards nomination or winning			1	1						2
Participation in conference, meeting		1								1
Others						1				1

Source: Author's elaboration with data from the C40 website and blog.

During an interview (see interview in 2014, Appendix 1), Susana Muhamad, Secretary General of the Mayor of Bogotá, speaks of how their participation in the C40 has allowed them to establish collaboration and have access to learning from other cities.[1] Other C40 documents give specific examples of how Bogotá's bus rapid transport system has been copied by 42 C40 cities (C40, 2016c). Concretely, the document explains how the "lead of Latin American cities like Curitiba and Bogotá" has encouraged other cities to develop bus rapid transit systems. It is relevant that half of those 42 C40 cities are in the northern hemisphere, showing that policy diffusion can go both ways: north–south and south–north. Among the cities that copied Bogotá's transport system between 2010 and 2020 are Buenos Aires, Guangzhou, Istanbul, and Tshwane. The varying distances of bus lanes built in these cities range from 22.5 km in Guangzhou to an expected 70 km in Tshwane, all systems which have a carrying capacity of several hundred thousand passengers per day (C40, 2016c).

Stockholm

Stockholm is another case that exemplifies international visibility gained through awards and participation in the C40. The city, part of the C40 since 2010, has also received numerous awards, not only for Hammarby Sjöstad but also for its historical commitment to sustainability. Some examples are the European Sustainable Cities Award in 1997 (Wenk, 2005), the declaration of the Climate City of the Year in 2004 (Saldert, 2017), the World Clean Energy Award in 2007, and the first Europe's Green Capital award, given by the European Commission in 2010. Within the C40, Stockholm led the Low Carbon District network in 2016 (Attström et al., 2016), and currently participates in several networks (e.g., green growth, land use planning).

Stockholm has appeared in the C40's website 28 times, 17 of which were appearances as a case study (see Appendix 2), and half of which centered either on the Hammarby model or on sustainable urban reforms. On other occasions, the city has been highlighted because of its energy and transport initiatives or its projects on green technology and to capture CO_2 (see Table 2).

[1]One of the examples given is that they have learned from some cities in Brazil how to bring informal garbage pickers into the formal waste management system in the city.

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TABLE 2 Times Stockholm has been a case study on C40's website or has been tagged in the C40's blog

	2011	2012	2013	2015	2016	2018	2019	Total
Stockholm as a case study								
EcoDistrict/land restructuring				3	3	1	1	8
Transport	1						1	2
Energy				1	2			3
Green IT					1			1
CO_2	1			2				3
Tagged in the blog								
City representative (interview, statement, initiatives)				2	2			4
Hosting or participation in conferences, meetings	1	3	1		2			7

Source: Author's elaboration with data from the C40 website and blog.

Stockholm has been tagged 11 times in the C40 blog for different reasons: either for hosting conferences on sustainable building and planning; supporting the Paris Agreement or for participating in learning programs on urbanism; or because of the statements or interviews with the city mayors, Tomas Gustafsson and Karin Wanngård.

Stockholm's participation in the network seems to have provided opportunities for sharing their local experiences—like Hammarby Sjöstad or the Stockholm Royal Seaport—with other C40 members. For instance, in 2015 Wanngård said that Stockholm was a global climate leader and that it was essential to meet and share experiences with other cities. They also said that they "appreciated" the opportunities that the C40 offers cities to share best practices and the power of networking to step up local climate action. This same idea is again found in a report by the Bomball Foundation, in which Stockholm is reported to use the C40 to share information and their achievements since they consider the network an extraordinary platform for exposure and to showcase climate solutions (Attström et al., 2016).

The influence of the so-called Hammarby model in other cities like Toronto is also widely acknowledged. Canadian officials went to Sweden to tour and learn from the Hammarby experience in 2004, and an exchange of knowledge between the two places continued as the remodeling of Toronto's waterfront developed into an area that wanted to be exemplary in terms of environmental performance (Swedish Trade Council, 2004; Tozer, 2018). In 2010, the then Vice President Xi Jinping visited the area, which later led to the creation of the Eco City Alliance between Chinese and Swedish companies to deliver sustainable urbanization solutions and to support China's sustainable city development. This led to the development of the eco and smart city pilot in Yantai, in northern China's Shandong province, in 2019 (Eco City Alliance, 2022). The Hammarby model has attracted interest from private companies such as the Thai Amata, the largest private Industrial Cities developer in Thailand. The model has also been exported to other countries through the SymbioCity, a project run by SKL International—a company owned by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions—to promote sustainable and inclusive cities in developing countries, like Kenya, Vietnam, or Indonesia.

Portland

Out of the three cases analyzed, Portland is the city that has the least awards, one of them being the C40's Sustainable Communities Award for its Healthy Connected City Network in 2014. However, it has been well positioned in national rankings: it ranked first in the 2006 and 2007 SustainLane U.S. City Rankings, fourth in the 2017 City Energy Efficiency Scorecard Report published by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, and appeared as the 9th greenest city in the United States in a report from WalletHub in 2019. In 2016 the city was awarded the best Climate Action Plans

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TABLE 3 Times Portland has been a case study on C40's website or has been tagged in the C40's blog

	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016	2020	Total
Portland as a case study							
Transport	1			1			2
Energy	2	1				1	4
Health				1			1
Tagged in the blog							
City representative (interview, statement, initiatives)			1	2	3		6
Awards			1		1		2
Others				2			2

Source: Author's elaboration with data from the C40 website and blog.

and Inventories project by the C40 Cities, thanks to Portland's strategies to reduce GHG emissions 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.

On the C40 website, Portland has appeared seven times as a case study, out of which four have been centered on its efforts to reduce energy either in the residential sector or in the public lighting system (see Appendix 3). As in the cases of Stockholm and Bogotá, this is a way in which the city has gained international visibility for its local policies.

Out of the ten times Portland has been tagged in the C40 blog, six times have been because of an interview with, or action taken by the mayor Charlie Hales, two times because of a nomination or winning and award, and two other times for its green bonds and its public charging infrastructure for electric vehicles (see Table 3). During an interview in 2016, Hales defined the C40 as a network where cities trade ideas. Concretely, Hales mentioned how Portland's local technology for producing renewable energy attracted the attention of the city of Johannesburg. A delegation of the African city, led by the mayor Parks Tau, visited Portland to evaluate the feasibility of an in-pipe hydropower system that could promote renewable energy generation, mitigate GHG emissions, and reduce the impact of load shedding (Pombo-van Zyl, 2015; interview in 2016, Appendix 3). The city of Portland has reported that connections made through the C40 led them to adopt the green bonds in 2015, an initiative to finance projects like clean power, clean transportation, renewable energy, and land use and reclamation.[2]

Despite the above, the C40 is not only a stand where cities can experience collaboration, learning, dissemination, and exchange of climate initiatives since its beginnings (Davidson et al., 2019; Gordon, 2013), but also a platform that helps cities attract investment and mobilize international funding (C40 and ARUP, 2015). Within the network, cities have access to workshops, working meetings, conferences, best practices, and technical reports. The celebration of the C40's annual "Cities Climate Leadership Awards," the publication of the "Cities100 report," or the "Good Practice Guides," and the creation of the Knowledge Hub are examples of tools that the network uses to showcase those best practices more in line with its own goals: to halve the carbon emissions of member cities within a decade while improving resilience and equity in cities (C40, 2021).

The C40 publishes cases on a wide variety of sectors (i.e., water, energy supply, mass transit as seen above) and, as reported by C40 staff, they prioritize the cities that, in their view, have adopted notable climate actions either in terms of GHG reduction potential or in their wider benefits (economic, social, health, etc.), advancements from which they believe other cities can learn. Through the Knowledge Hub they look for examples where cities actively want to support other cities, while the case studies published in C40.org (those examined in this article) tend to be lighter and more focused on providing cities with recognition and a platform to highlight the city's own achievements. C40 staff consulted

[2]The green bonds are based on the experience of Johannesburg, the first C40 city to issue them in 2014 (interview in 2016, Appendix 3; C40 and ARUP, 2015, p. 64), another example of south–north diffusion within the network.

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for this research have also explained that in the selection of cases they try to cover all core topics for all regions, which obviously means that only a selection of actions reported or undertaken by city members are published. Furthermore, since they are aware that northern countries tend to dominate with case studies, they make an effort to seek out cases from the global south.

Some argue that the organization may be more focused on responding to the wishes of funders and identifying evidence of the impact of the C40 among its members, than on organizational learning, following up on the network activities or supporting accountability at the network city (Attström et al., 2016; Hakelberg, 2014). However, staff approached for this research acknowledge a shift on their work to encourage cities to monitor the progress of the actions implemented, and to orient their efforts toward the most impactful climate actions identified by the network. Undoubtedly, this can be understood as a way to influence local climate action.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed how local initiatives can be an inspiration to others and how internal factors and diffusion mechanisms are important in explaining the internationalization of norms. Internal factors, such as the emergence of coalitions and the existence of political, economic, or social characteristics, play a key role in the successful development of local initiatives, as identified by Berry and Berry (2007) and Sabatier and Weible (2007), and as seen in the examples of Bogotá with the increased available finance and new staff in the city council, in Stockholm with the bidding for the Olympic Games and the engagement of private investors, in Portland with public and private collaboration, and in all three cities with strong political leadership.

Local initiatives have been internationalized through the active participation of these cities in the C40 network, but also through other efforts due to the international visibility of those initiatives, such as applying for awards (as in Bogotá), or through the creation of a brand to be promoted internationally (as in Stockholm).

The data outlined above suggest an interest on behalf of city representatives in increasing visibility for their local policies by applying for awards and by participating in TMNs, ultimately contributing to policy diffusion. In the three cases examined, mayors have been active in being interviewed, participating, and organizing meetings and conferences in the C40—mostly on those areas in which the city is seen as a leader—and in becoming a referent in that particular area. All this has contributed to increase the visibility of these cities in the international domain, by sharing their understandings, expectations, knowledge, and practices. These processes contribute to the creation of norms, preferences, and identities due to the increasing contact among cities that occurs in these networks (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Marsh & Sharman, 2009; Wendt, 1995). In addition to a high visibility of their representatives, the three cities have appeared as case studies within the C40 network in the area they are recognized for at least half of the time, contributing to reinforcing the image of that city as a pioneer city, and to the internationalization of those specific initiatives. It is true, however, that staff at the C40 selects which cases they give more visibility to, therefore playing a role in modeling the image of city members.

Ambitious climate and sustainability policies along with strong leadership and certain internal determinants, such as available finance or citizen awareness, are important in explaining why some local initiatives became international (at least in the cases examined). It also seems clear that the local realm cannot disengage from the international one and that while it is the success of local initiatives that allows cities to gain international echo, there is a feedback process in which the local sphere also benefits from the international visibility. Therefore, there is also a legitimate interest from local authorities in making local successes visible to an international audience. Thus, this study has identified a similar pattern through which local policies get international resonance in the three cities examined. In the first stage, there is initial leadership coming from the city council in the promotion of local policies. These local policies then gain international visibility through awards/rankings, and

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through the promotion of such policies within TMNs, which leads to greater support for those policies and their endorsement by other actors, as Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) identified as the first stage of the norm cycle.

During a second stage, norm acceptance and a cascade effect through policy diffusion occurs. Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland have used the C40 network to expose and diffuse their ideas and projects, thus helping shape the norms and practices of other cities. However, it has not been explored whether this was the main reason that these cities joined the network; indeed, it is more than possible that in any or all cases, diffusion occurred regardless of network membership, as clearly shown in the case of Stockholm, establishing partnerships with cities outside the network, or of Bogotá by winning awards outside the C40. Yet, the three cities have mentioned learning and exchange of knowledge as an important goal for them as members of the C40 network. Thus, it is meaningful that the representatives of the three cities examined regard the C40 as a platform to reinforce the voice of cities internationally. Stockholm's mayor said that the C40 offers the opportunity to make changes and push boundaries. The representatives of Portland underlined the leadership city representatives are already showing as well as the need to bring more cities to the climate dialogue. Susana Muhamad, from Bogotá, mentioned that cities were creating a new political actor that would be able to advocate for faster solutions to climate change (see interviews in Appendices 1–3). It seems clear then that at least these three cities regard the C40 network as a platform to exchange information and gain visibility.

Indeed, the C40 network is an increasingly visible diplomatic actor in environmental governance (Fraundorfer, 2017). Socialization within the C40 can lead to interest convergence as identified by Bearce and Bondanella (2007), and that can, in turn, be a fabulous way of exerting influence in and through global climate governance. With the publication and sharing of cases, the C40 acts as a diffusion multiplier and expects that other cities will adapt and replicate best practice and thus engage in a progressive environmental agenda (Davidson et al., 2019; Toly, 2008), in addition to promoting members and attracting new ones (Fenton & Busch, 2016). Apart from being a forum where peers share their experiences, the network has evolved to also offer direct technical assistance and facilitate contacts with businesses and foundations (Acuto & Ghojeh, 2019), like Bloomberg Philanthropies, Children Investment Fund Foundation, ARUP, and IKEA. This should make us question the interests of cities, networks, and all those private entities involved in the increasing business of climate action. Moreover, some authors point to the C40 as an orchestrator in climate governance when it drives transformative change by generating governance policies and practices for a later diffusion among members (Gordon & Johnson, 2019). The organization of awards to identify those cities more committed to tackling climate change can also be added to the ways the C40 orchestrates climate governance, because diffusion works in both ways: as a creation of alliance opportunities through visualization of its members, but also as an amplification of the C40 network itself and the important work that it does.

Four policy diffusion mechanisms have been found in this work, characterized by both north–south and south–north. Emulation has been identified in cases where energy, sustainable building, and transport projects from Portland, Stockholm, and Bogotá have inspired other cities. In the case of Stockholm though, evidence of direct diffusion of the Hammarby model within the C40 network is not clear, since some of the diffusions identified occurred before the city became a member of the network. Then, we can only assume that the visibility given by the network will potentially inspire further replication of these best practices. But even when there is a will to replicate others' initiatives, this research has shown that internal factors (e.g., finance, public-private partnerships) and strong leadership are important for policy change.

The research has identified learning as the main mechanism through which policy diffusion occurs between cities participating in the C40 network. In the study of learning in the context of diffusion, what matters is the perception of a causal link, and it is safe to assume that correlations are very often taken as an indication of an underlying causal relationship (Gilardi, 2012). Competition seems to happen when cities apply for awards, appear in rankings, or compete within the C40 to be the recipients of finance from philanthropic organizations and businesses. While coercion has not been

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identified as a major policy diffusion in this research, it could happen when the C40 network directs the actions of cities toward specific areas, for instance when it suggests the decarbonization of the electricity grid or the improvement in waste management as the main action areas where cities could focus their efforts (McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, and C40, 2017), or when that focus becomes a condition to access funding or assistance. Since coercion seems to occur to a lesser extent than within states, at least in the C40 network, it could be assumed that cooperation is, by the time being, a more common dynamic among cities involved in global environmental governance.

The three cities examined confirm previous work that point to pioneers—Bogotá, Stockholm, and Portland are recognized as such—being more active within TMNs (Hakelberg, 2014; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009), but further work would be needed to find out whether action and visibility within the network is limited to only a few. Future research would also be necessary to identify if those practices that have attained acceptance among other cities reach the third stage of Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle: that they are taken for granted globally. This article also leaves many strings for future research regarding how the internationalization of local norms and policies occurs in other cities and how to better understand the role of TMNs in climate governance, given their own interests in being perceived as useful, and their connection to private donors and companies. Finally, while it cannot be assumed that strong local leadership, gaining awards, and participating in a transnational network always lead to international visibility and to the diffusion of local norms, it surely helps.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks David Mena and the anonymous referees at *Politics & Policy*, whose comments helped to strengthen the argument of this article. I also want to express my gratitude to Jana Davidova, Amy Kirbyshire, and Andrea Fernández at C40 for kindly answering my emails with lots of questions. Last, but not least, to Vanesa Castán Broto, Linda Westman, and Javier Morales for their feedback at different stages of this work.

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How to cite this article: Ruiz-Campillo, Xira. 2022. "The drive to sustainability: A way in which local initiatives diffuse internationally." *Politics & Policy* 50(5): 967–991. https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12496.

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APPENDIX 1: BOGOTÁ AS A CASE STUDY AND VISIBILITY IN THE C40'S BLOG

Case study in the C40 website

C40. 2011. "Bogotá's Cicloruta Is One of the Most Comprehensive Cycling Systems in the World." *Cidade de Sao Paolo*. http://www.c40.com/case_studies/bogotá's-cicloruta-is-one-of-the-most-comprehensive-cycling-systems-in-the-world.

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