

The unstoppable internationalisation of cities and regions

Issues - Trends - Prospects

Highlights of the symposium
Held on 11th and 12th December 2017 in Lyon



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Foreword

This document summarises the contributions and debates during the symposium on 11th and 12th December 2017. Its purpose is to report the points and ideas debated as the facilitators and authors recorded them. It also aims to highlight how eager participants were to discuss and challenge their points of view and analyses. The debates were made all the richer by the guidance of institutional representatives (researchers, technicians, heads of institutions, elected representatives and so on) and the open approach of participants. This working document should not be considered as an official report outlining the course of the symposium, or as minutes. However, through the points presented, participants may recognise their contributions, none of which have been overlooked.

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M. Christophe MESTRE

Ministre de l'Énergie

M. Edouard BLANC

Président du Comité d'Énergie et de Climat, et
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modérateur : Bernard HUBERTON - CHOREL

INTRODUCTION

A symposium which was part of a long-term research programme.

This symposium, following on from the one organised in 1996 by Cités Unies France (CUF) and Paris-I University, entitled '*Is the meaning of decentralised cooperation changing?*', as well as the one organised in 2013 by ARRICOD (an organisation of experts on the European and international action of local authorities) and the IEP (Political Studies Institute) in Grenoble, entitled '*The international action of local authorities*', brings to a close a research programme on the Internationalisation of cities and regions: diverse dynamics, a global trend, origin and future of the decentralised cooperation underway since 2014, on the initiative of the CUF and the CIEDEL (International Research Centre for Local Development).

This research involved the CESSP (European Centre of Sociology and Political Science) at Paris I University, the AFD (French Development Agency), the RAURA (Auvergne Rhône-Alpes regional authorities), the IEP in Lyon and the city of Lyon. It was the subject of an internal research seminar at the CIEDEL, of workshops on the issue of internationalisation, of a call for contributions followed by the production of some twenty articles and the publication of a special edition of the International Review on Development Studies (RIED, Paris I University).

The international symposium, held on 11th and 12th December 2017 in Lyon, and attended by over

200 participants over the two days, brought the first phase of this research to a close.

A well-established framework, research which shows limitations

The research set out several priorities:

- to use French local authorities as a starting point, as the changes in external action of local authorities today are happening at their level;
- to promote the external dynamic of relations rather than the phenomena of internationalisation through diaspora and migration. Therein lies a whole other field of research;
- to focus on transnational, or even translocal relations between infra-state areas, while remaining aware of the important part played by states and international organisations in the organisation of these relations, which is once again an area of research in its own right;
- to exclude any kind of assessment, the aim of the research being to understand the reasons for these changes rather than to judge their merits.

And one ambition

To compare the varying perspectives of practitioners, researchers and elected representatives, across generations and categories.



Debates during the symposium on the unstoppable internationalisation of cities and regions, at Lyon Catholic University

Photo : Gaël Belsoeur, CIEDEL

The symposium's issue

Internationalisation processes have become an indicator of the work of local and regional authorities, regardless of their level, size, location and political leanings. Torn between the contradictory imperatives of community work and promoting their local area, local interests and inclusion in a global world, their international policy bears the mark of the deep-rooted changes underway.

For all that, contrary to conventional wisdom, international relations between local authorities are not a consequence of increased globalisation. The Gand congress in 1913 which instituted the International Union of Cities is seen as the founding act.

At the end of the Second World War, these relations broadened through a desire to support the reconciliation process among nations and help build lasting peace. Since the 1980s relations between local authorities from the North and South have increased, a policy known as 'decentralised development cooperation' in France. From the very beginning, it was widely supported both by local authority decision-making bodies and other local stakeholders. With political, and often financial, support from governments, it was founded on solidarity, then consolidated through development aid and institutional support.

At the same time, decentralised cooperation proponents began to query the mutual interest which could stem from these relations, while being subject to criticism from those people who believed that this form of action did not fall under local interests, which form the basis of local authority work.

Today, the issues surrounding the economic development of local areas in the North have led local decision-makers to drive forward new strategies to raise the attractiveness and profile of their areas, in line with 'local marketing' approaches beginning to come on the scene.

These new strategies have helped create a complex set of operations, rebranded by stakeholders under the generic term '*External Action of Local Authorities - EALA*'. This change in terminology on the one hand addresses the crisis which decentralised development cooperation is suffering, and on the other hand the investment made by local and regional authorities to raise their profile in a world where economic, cultural, training, research as well as other rivalries are on the rise. Finally it also addresses citizens' new 'ways of life' which the international movement of people (tourism, migration, etc.) has fostered.

The internationalisation of cities and regions is also a constantly evolving phenomenon. It has led public authorities to implement an array of strategies to assert their interests in a globally-competitive world, to which demonstrations of solidarity are not immune. According to the ambitions of their elected representatives, local authorities seek with varying degrees of success to reconcile the contradictory requirements they face in a global world.

Local and regional authorities' international relations strategies have therefore become an explicit or implicit part of local policy.

These developments lead us to question the nature of the changes and coherence of different aspects of local authorities' external action.

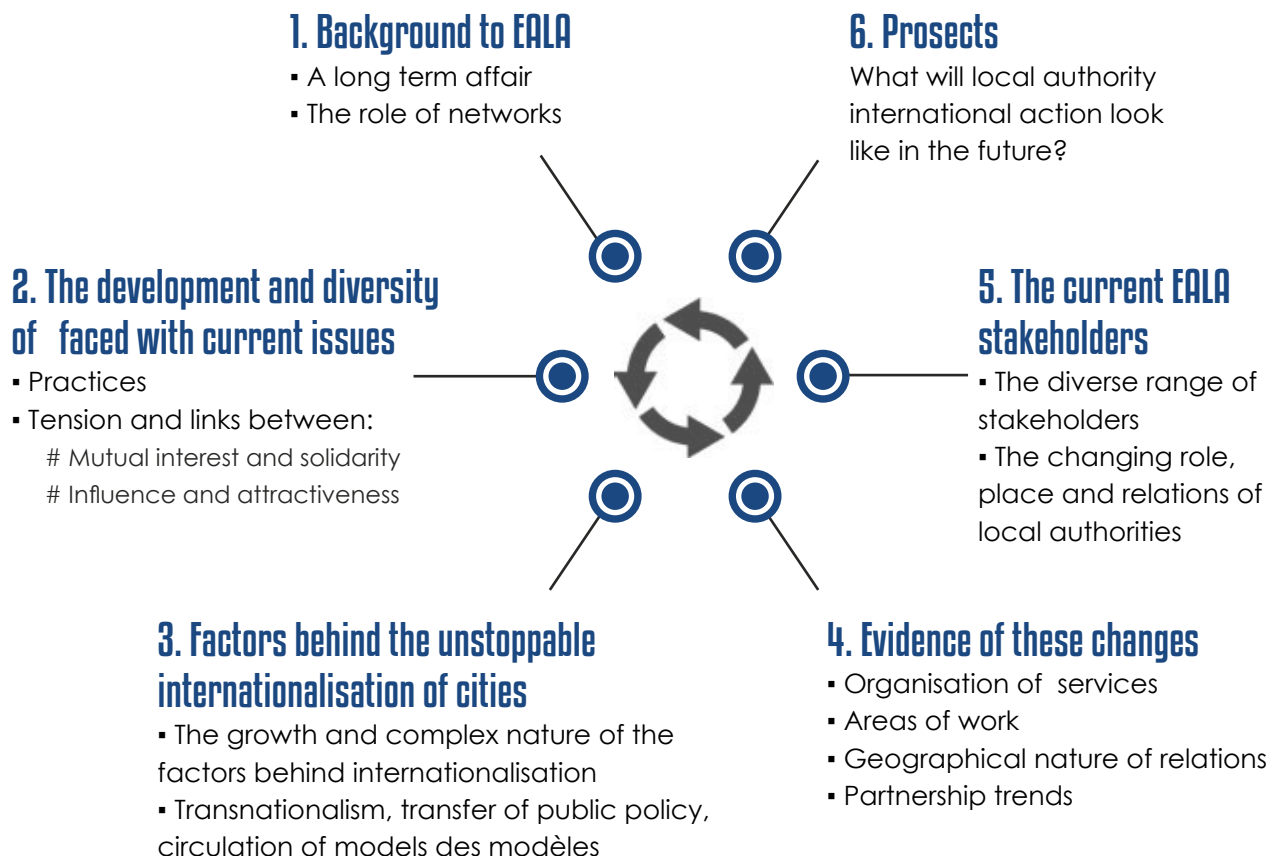
How to define internationalisation?

The internationalisation of cities and regions can be defined as the dynamic process of flows from or to foreign localities. These flows can involve just as equally people, institutions, ideas, objects, architectural models, ways of life, gastronomy and more. These flows can be deliberate (to raise the attractiveness and profile of an area) or endured (arrival of mafia organisations, relocation of companies, demands from multinationals, especially GAFA). They test the prevailing situation and apparent sustainability of an area and how it changes in line with these flows. They also test the area's international presence (profile, influence, prominence, etc.). External action led by local authorities can be both a demonstration and a driving force behind the internationalisation of the area (CIEDEL 2017).

During the research programme and the symposium, the notion of internationalisation was understood as the extent of external action of local authorities (EALA).

Outline of the symposium proceedings

The symposium took the following form, which reflects how this document is set out.





GAND
1913

Le Pavillon du Congo
De Congoleesche Afdeeling
Kolonialpalast
The Pavillon of the belgian Congo



Poster from the Gand universal exhibition in 1913

EALA, a little known story

Internationalisation, a long-term affair

The network of Hanseatic cities appeared from 13th century and included over 80 cities which joined forces to defend their interests against states and pirates, acting as a precursor to 'modern' networks such as Eurocity.

"It is a question of understanding how cities have contributed towards transforming society by creating links among themselves, over and above national borders."

Renaud Payre, Director of the Lyon Political Studies

From Greek city-states to medieval Hanseatic cities, the internationalisation of local authorities is a longstanding idea, dating back as far as cities themselves.

Internationalisation, promoted by the networks of local authorities...

Moving on in time, it was on the fringes of the Gand universal exhibition that the first modern network originated in 1913, the International Union of Cities (IUC). Two main factors lie at the origin of this network:

- The appearance of new urban configurations related to the industrial revolution, which prompted local councillors and technicians in charge of town planning to develop multifarious contacts (travel, meetings about technical aspects, information sharing, etc.) on an array of topics (transport, health and safety, etc.) in order to help solve the problems they faced in designing and promoting these modern urban configurations,

- Belgian, French and Italian socialists gave new impetus before and after the First World War. They believed that local councillors had a part to play in the 'world community' which could not be run solely by states.

...which addressed different visions...

This first type of network aligned itself with municipal internationalism whereby 'the world would be transformed by cities', as towns were seen as the basic building block of society leading to a world which was governed primarily by local authorities. It was succeeded by a new generation of networks after the Second World War, based on contending interpretations of the international order, as networks followed the major schools of thought of the bipolar world during the cold war.

The fall of the Berlin wall led to a long and painful unification process of the international networks of cities which was completed in 2004 with the creation of the global umbrella network UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) and the growth of networks based on topics, categories or techniques, bringing back the initial idea of the IUC where 'cities support cities'.

The UCLG network, which celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2017, includes 70 cities and 40 associated stakeholders (businesses, architects, etc.) who work on city lighting.

...but of whose history people are truly unaware.

People remain misinformed or unaware even of the history of the internationalisation of cities and the creation of networks, for several reasons:

- **A complex story**

The history of the internationalisation of cities, which lies at the crossroads of several disciplines, is related to global

geopolitical developments, urban changes and the balance of power between local authorities.

- **Networks at the heart of international issues**

Even when 'discrete', networks are real issues in the international balance of power, through the potential which they represent.

During the Second World War, the IUC, coveted both by the USA and the Nazis, ended up being taken over by the latter, who moved the headquarters to Berlin where all the archives disappeared.

- **The influence of the state**

The history of local authorities and their organisations remains difficult in societies where the state retains central power and where a state-centred vision remains dominant.

- **The invisible nature of the international work of local authorities in the eyes of states, 'technical and financial partners' and international organisations**

Finally, despite the fact that some states such as France and Italy offer a rather favourable regulatory framework for the external action of cities and regions, this work is not always fully recognised by states and international organisations which are by virtue take an inter-state approach.

A blank page is therefore waiting to record the history of EALA and explain the current developments.



Photo: Bohyunlee - CC-BY-SA
Only Lyon, the city and the metropolitan area of Lyon's brand

The diversity of EALA with regard to the issues of the 3rd millennium

Connections and tensions between prominence - attractiveness and mutual interest - solidarity

Unstoppable internationalisation...

The internationalisation of local authorities is underway and affects all local and regional communities. It is a global trend which no local authority, regardless of their size, location or level of political independence, can escape.

... in line with EALA in transition

This unstoppable internationalisation has led local authorities to establish or re-establish their international relations policies, which can be seen through a change in EALA.

"Our centre of gravity has shifted significantly towards economic development, yet this has been done without ever abandoning the basis of our international work, in other words development cooperation."

Christophe Meunier, Head of the International Relations department, Lyon metropolitan area

This change is related to two key developments:

- The quest for local interests, which involves policies to enhance the attractiveness, raise the profile and develop the economy of the local area,

"When regional councillors talk about economic development, they are looking to safeguard employment in the local area."

Ivan Dedessus Le Moustier, Head of the International Cooperation and Solidarity department for the AURA region (Auvergne-Rhône Alpes)

- Increased awareness that we are all part of a shared humanity, which requires policies on the global issues of this beginning of the third millennium: youth employment, fighting inequality, fighting global warming, migration, peace and security.

"We cannot ensure everyone's happiness here, if things are not going well elsewhere."

Jean-Marie Tétart, Mayor of Houdan, Chairman of the YCID public interest group

... which can be seen through contradictory priorities...

External action of local authorities in the North is therefore today torn between:

- Returning to a local focus, seeking pro domo interests supported by policies to raise the profile which ultimately aim to develop the local economy and attractiveness.
- Contributing towards the quest for universal common good, the foundation of international solidarity and of the protection of global public assets as well as the push to rebalance the situation of disadvantaged areas, which remains a major issue.

... more often solved by juxtaposing policies than by structuring...

These contradictions can be seen through stances which most commonly discredit decentralised development cooperation and international solidarity policies in favour of new policies to promote economic development and international prominence.

As a result, we have often seen a drop in the budgets allocated to decentralised cooperation relations with the South and to development education work, whereas taking part in networks, in international events, organising political and economic projects for new destinations (Russia, Korea, Brazil, etc.), hosting foreign missions and building intra-European relations has become the daily affair of local authority international departments.

The dynamics between these different policies are rarely considered, and more often than not lead to juxtaposing rather than complementary policies.

... with a cursor dependant on the level of political support for EALA.

In a large majority of cases, support for international solidarity is the fruit of passive consensus rather than an open debate within decision-making bodies. Yet, the issues relating to current developments require explicit political choices.

"The Lyon metropolitan area has established a group of councillors in charge of the metropolitan area's international policy. This policy attempts to maintain the right balance between developing prominence and attractiveness, and international solidarity."

Christophe Meunier, Head of the International Relations department, Lyon metropolitan area

EALA subject to marked trends

Current developments have changed the ways and purpose of international relations between LAs:

• **Focuss on pro domo interests**

The austerity measures imposed on French local authorities in recent years, surrounded by a discourse of 'budget restrictions and decreased public spending' has led councillors to develop arguments in favour of EALA. This reasoning centres the message on local interests: working primarily for 'one's own' interests rather than alongside other local authorities, or in support of colleagues abroad.

• **The economy as a new standard**

Local authority international policies all make reference to the economy. This is partly due to the belief that the economy should not be considered solely at a national level. However, it is also related to the fact that French councillors are required to justify their local authority's international work through a 'return on investment' for the local area, despite the fact that calculating interests in such a strict manner is not the only indicator of the international work of local authorities.

"Today, there cannot be an economy if we do not foster international trade in a global economy."

Etienne Blanc, First Vice-Chairman of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region

• **Messages based on slogans**

Attractiveness, prominence, regional marketing, and economic development are all key terms today which more often than not remain a mystery. They show ambition, yet are still rarely transformed into explicit aims and content agreed upon by local authorities.

• **The diverse and cross-cutting nature of EALA**

EALA, which for many years was led by the relevant departments on a 'project' basis, in line with the operating procedures of decentralised development cooperation, has diversified to include a vast array of activities (from developing multi-stakeholder projects to breaking into new markets, from organising cultural and multicultural events to taking part in international sporting events, from hosting students to setting up centres of excellence). An important part of its role today is to become a resource centre for local authorities' sector-specific departments.

"The imperative we are facing is one of an extreme cross-disciplinary approach."

Christophe Meunier, Head of the International Relations department, Lyon metropolitan area

- **The involvement of local stakeholders**

It is now accepted that local authorities alone cannot be responsible for EALA. In order to achieve concrete outcomes at a local level, it has now been acknowledged that a whole range of stakeholders need to be involved (diaspora, economic, health, cultural, private, charitable and public operators) and that governance needs to be redesigned in order to achieve the targets set.

This needs to happen both in terms of solidarity policies and in terms of policies to enhance attractiveness and economic development.

"Our ambition is to get regions to work together, to get France to work together."

Jean-Marie Tétart, Chairman of the YCID public interest group, Mayor of Houdan

- **Assessment and accountability**

As resources have become increasingly rare, local authority decision-makers and tax-paying citizens all seek to ensure the legitimacy and 'benefits' gained from international action. As such, despite the fact that judging the impact of international policies remains a complex task in terms of methodology, assessment is becoming the norm as a way of measuring accountability.

In light of this, local authority councillors from the South tend to take a back seat.

As part of these changes, the amount and intensity of direct relations between heads of local authorities are reduced

(actions, relations, budget). This is particularly the case for relations between local authorities in the North and the South as councillors from the latter, aside from the most prominent ones, have less and less control over cooperation decisions.

The role of 'small' local authorities remains fixed...

These changes also raise the question of the role of 'small' local authorities, often committed to long-term intra-European relations (twinning) and relations with local authorities in the South (decentralised development cooperation with local authorities in the Sahel region for example). They are subject to a 'double penalty': the difficulty in extending their scope of intervention in terms of EALA, added to which the difficulty maintaining close relations with their partners in the South for security reasons.

... while legislators are opening up new horizons for local authorities.

While the French legal framework is already characterised by its considerable flexibility in relation to external action of local authorities, the recent Letchimy bill now enables French local authorities to sign agreements with states. Local authorities in French overseas territories are particularly affected by these changes as it offers them the chance to build effective policies with their neighbours, as is the case for Guyane.

"The only way to cope with French Guiana's structural difficulties is to cooperate with our immediate environment, Suriname, Guyana, Brazil, Haiti, etc."

Anne Mathieu, head of French Guiana's Local Authority office for the states of Suriname, Guyana and CARICOM

Paradoxically, these changes open up new prospects for the external action of French local authorities.



Photo: Afek Ben Chahed - CC-BY-SA
The Tunisian symphony orchestra at Dougga International Festival

The reasons behind the unstoppable internationalisation of local authorities

The multifactorial nature and increase in pace of the internationalisation of local and regional authorities...

EALA subject to marked trends...

The increase in pace of the internationalisation of local authorities is a general, global trend insofar as it affects every local authority, from global cities to rural communities, from towns to regions, including counties and inter-municipality groupings. It covers every area of the world, the South, the North, emerging countries and transcends the political divide.

It is already a long-standing trend. While there is not unanimous support for every form of a denser, more diverse and more complex internationalisation, the development of international relations by local authorities is well-received in principle.

The internationalisation of cities has been marked by an array of factors and drivers, including:

- the continuous increase in the movement of people, whether due to migration, diaspora, tourism, studies or professional reasons.
- the organisation of economic, cultural, academic, sporting and professional events such as universal exhibitions or the Olympic Games which unite participants from different countries.
- economic flows of goods, capital and knowledge

In the city of Grenoble, 45% of industrial employment is dependent on international investment.

- technology, particularly information and communications technology which brings the world together
- increased awareness of the finite nature of the planet and our common resources which we need to share and protect.

... bearing the traces of heavy transnationalism...

Transnationalism is understood here to be 'the flows and relations between people, organisations, ideas and images which cross borders with or without the agreement of states, and which influence 'official' international relations'. It is driven through local authority transnational, cross-disciplinary and specialised networks, technicians, diaspora, congresses and festivals, discussions between social and economic stakeholders. Transnationalism may include tourism, internal relations among religious orders and student exchanges. It covers any type of formal or informal organisation which is involved in building relations between societies or fractions of societies from different countries, each contributing its own talent and using approaches which have no need to be coherent.

This multiplicity of dynamics cannot be ignored by local authorities, which are a part of it themselves. They need to take these, sometimes long-standing, often innovative relations into account, which involve organisations and people who are often based in the local area and with whom they have already developed ties.

This context has a direct impact on the international relations strategies developed by local authorities, as they move between taking a leading, supporting or spectator's role.

The city of Johannesburg has developed a proactive internationalisation strategy which involves the different city departments and regional stakeholders to help raise the city's international profile.

... which includes circulating models...

The internationalisation of local authorities, through its unanimous reach, can more or less implicitly promote the spread of models for planning towns, regions, societies and spaces, as circulating models promotes best practice, the success of 'effective methods', increasing zeal by national as well as local authorities to seek what works worldwide in terms of public policy and the dissemination of proven technical plans. This drive is primarily beneficial to local authorities which are highly experienced and endowed with competent, developed departments. However, not all local authorities stand on an equal footing, including in countries where they are age-old bodies.

This circulation of models varies from 'copy-paste' ideas to melting pots where models are transformed during their journey, giving rise to innovative practices. It has been facilitated greatly by the development of networks which are the leading vehicles of their dissemination.

The city of Porto Alegre and its local stakeholders significantly contributed towards formalising and circulating the model for citizen participation in municipal budgeting, known as 'participatory budgeting', which has since been copied by local authorities and states on every continent and which could be seen as a hybridisation of the model which demonstrates the extent of its variability.

... yet which is part of decision-makers' changing public policy frames of reference...

Have the changes in local authority international relations policies led to or arisen from explicit or implicit changes in the frames of reference of decision-makers? Opting to raise the profile and the attractiveness of an area rather than promoting solidarity and partners with fewer human, technical and financial resources says something about the values which lie behind decisions taken.

Could this swing in the balance, from decentralised development cooperation focussed primarily on international solidarity, to external action whose dual outcome is to raise the profile and the attractiveness, be considered as the 'normalisation' of the work of local authorities in the current competitive context? Should it be understood as a change the frame of reference from solidarity to competition, from an altruistic leaning to a generalised form of selfishness?

The city of Johannesburg has developed a community decentralised cooperation policy at a sub-regional level, just like the city of Lilongwe in Malawi, however this community policy helps raise the international profile of Johannesburg by contributing towards its leadership in networks through the support of the assisted cities.

...while questioning the actual impact of local policies in terms of the internationalisation of regions...

The internationalisation of cities and regions is an inevitable process which takes a variety of forms. It can be analysed from various different standpoints, involves a diverse range of stakeholders and ultimately raise the question of how much room for manoeuvre local authorities have to regulate, influence and organise their internationalisation.



Operational illustrations of changes in EALA

A new context, driving concrete operational changes for local authorities

The development of French local authorities' external action has been influenced by three aspects:

- Changes in the political majority of many local councils following the most recent local elections;
- Budgetary limitations imposed on local authorities which have increased over recent years;
- Regional restructuring due to the NOTRe bill in France which has reshuffled responsibilities and decision-making and demonstrated the state's ambition to recentralise.

This three-fold influence should not detract from the impact of the contextual changes in which local authorities are immersed, namely displays of their area's internationalisation.

In some local authorities, this new context can be seen through the disappearance of international departments, or through the latter's integration into sector-specific departments.

"European and international work today is very much focussed regions and cities, to the detriment of medium-sized and small counties and towns which are finding their services being cut"

Benoit Cathala, Head of the CNFPT's Europe Mission

It is also important to remember that while the internationalisation drive is powerful, the global budget for external action of local authorities is generally less than 1% of councils' budgets.

A new political order...

This new context can be seen through a change to the political order, to which local authorities' international departments must adapt.

This new political order may do one of three things:

- be compatible with the former order, which remains unchanged

"The new political order was to keep all the indicators we could have the same (intercultural, events, decentralised cooperation) and to promote two new cursors, firstly enhancing the attractiveness and economic development of our area, secondly, embarking on the great adventure of European funding."

Samuel Caillaut, Youth, Student Services and International relations Director, city of Chambéry

- replace the former order in part, which is reduced

"Today, we see a 'scaling back' of the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region's decentralised cooperation policy, due to budgetary constraints and the rise in the importance of economic issues. This current 'scaling back' is also due to the policies in place over recent years which have produced a wide geographical dispersal, and consequently a thinly-spread budget leading to a lack of results (...) We prefer to walk away from cooperation agreements if we deem them to be secondary."

Bruno Chiaverini, Director of International Relations, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region

- replace the former order

The decentralised development cooperation relations of the former Nord Pas de Calais and Picardie regions with Niger, Mali, Benin, Madagascar, Senegal and Morocco, have all been stopped by the Hauts de France region barring one exception.

This new order affects the nature and location of international action, the areas of intervention but also the operating modes.

Changes in the geography of partnerships

"Today, we are launching two new cooperation agreements, one with a city in Quebec on linking up companies in the digital sector and developing a business incubator; and the second with a city in China, which will be hosting the ski events for the next Winter Olympics in 2022, on the request on the mountain cluster."

Samuel Caillaut, Youth, Student Services and International relations Director, city of Chambéry

"I returned to the regional council a year ago. I discovered a pile of 30 to 35 cooperation agreements which were each useful and relevant, but put together they no longer constituted a policy. So we decided to organise this policy using a three-pronged approach: Europe, the first priority; second priority, the French-speaking world; and third priority the wider world (Japan, Russia, South Korea...) [...]. We had to forsake some relations and cooperation agreements: with Vietnam, Laos, Brazil, Argentina and Tunisia. The new regional executive powers, in accordance with the directives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and through the possibilities made available by the legislation, now aims to embark on cooperation arrangements and measures without specific agreements, to suit any available opportunities, primarily economic ones. The ambition is to be more flexible, more responsive and less tied up!"

Bruno Chiaverini, Director of International Relations, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region

...which can be seen through concrete operational changes...

"Our profession has changed greatly. Staff are often at sea with the changes in EALA"

Frédéric Deshayes, Vice-Chair of ARRICOD

A change in meaning but also in the organisation of services.

For several years now, the different local authority teams working on international issues have begun to merge, and increasingly these mergers also include teams in charge of economic issues, leading on some occasions to the creation of a single department. These organisational changes have often led to the disappearance of terms such as 'cooperation' and 'solidarity' to be replaced by 'attractiveness', 'prominence' or 'international relations'.

Rarely evident outside regional authorities, these organisational changes affect the priorities assigned to these departments, the human resources required (amount and level of qualifications) and the technical provisions required to implement the policies agreed.

In Marseille, the International and European relations department is now part of the Deputy Directorate General for the promotion and profile of Marseille.

The implementation of which requires significant investment in training for local authority staff.

Of the 1.8 million international local authority employees, around 5,000 work directly on international issues. This raises the question of training these 5,000 specialists, to help them adapt to changes in the EALA, but above all the 1.8 million staff who need a more international outlook to make sure the cross-cutting nature of international issues is taken into consideration more effectively.

The operational changes in EALA have been marked by tensions between continuing work on the previous initiatives, approaches and relations, and broadening the international work to include new objectives, new fields of work and new approaches, as well as consolidating the cross-cutting role of international work in relation to other departments.

In a sector where staff are significantly involved in their local authorities' international relations, many struggle to identify with some of the changes underway and to master the necessary skills to carry out the new roles required of them.

A geographical change

Local authorities are relocating their partnerships. The work and relations with less developed countries are now in competition with, and sometimes abandoned in favour of relations first and foremost with Europe (especially cross-border cooperation), and with medium-income countries (e.g. Brazil), those undergoing economic restructuring (e.g. Russia) or experiencing strong development (e.g. China). Among less developed countries, those 'emerging' countries such as Ivory Coast are quite clearly prioritised over countries which are more structurally vulnerable, such as Niger or Madagascar. French local authorities are therefore given support and even encouraged by the state to 'go elsewhere' (Afghanistan, Irak, India, etc.) and to be part of an 'increased economic diplomacy' where they can find their rightful place.

Sector-specific changes

Changes in the wealthiest societies - and in the expectations of their citizens - have put pressure on EALA to make improvements to areas such as urban transportation, town and country planning, smart cities, international perspectives and so on, which affect the local area and more broadly sustainable development and the fight against global warming.

Work in areas such as foreign aid (education, health, hydraulics, etc.) and institutional support (capacity building, strengthening services, contracting authority support, etc.) tend to become areas which fall increasingly under the jurisdiction of cooperation by international organisations and states or NGOs, reducing local authorities to a secondary role.

Temporal changes

For a long time, the majority of local authority international relations, twinning arrangements and decentralised cooperation were implemented as part of long-term cooperation agreements, bi- or multi-lateral twinning agreements which sought to maintain partnerships.

On the one hand the Canfin-Girardin bill and on the other the ways and means of EALA have meant that French local authority international relations today are increasingly established outside of any contractual framework, based on 'one shot' practices as part of utilitarian relations rather than partnerships.

... which demonstrate a change in the nature of the international action of local authorities?

While the changes in favour of enhancing the profile, the attractiveness and the economic development of local areas are clear, it would be wrong to suggest that solidarity and consideration for global issues are disappearing from the strategic decisions on which local authorities found their international relations.

More often than not, both approaches coexist, however tensions between them remain high and there is little work done to make their strategies complementary.

Local and regional stakeholders of international action

Local and regional stakeholders of international action are increasingly diverse...

All organised forces have a strong tendency to look beyond the limits of their local area, beyond the borders of the state where they work. These forces, whether individual or collective stakeholders, each have a different status (formal or informal) and social purpose (economic operator, cultural institution, healthcare training, charitable organisations, universities, religious orders, etc.). They develop their own international action and relations, according to their own interests, purposes and methods. In light of this, we may question the part which local authorities can play, whose primary purpose is to serve the interests of their local residents.

... and local authorities are the appropriate body to unite them...

In a local area, the only institution which can unite all the different stakeholders and foster dialogue between them is the local authority.

"The most appropriate body to unite local stakeholders is the local authority, the public operator. It's the legitimacy of politics."

Christophe Cizeron, Deputy Managing Director, GL Events

... despite the fact that this is not a spontaneous or recognised role, through lack of awareness or differences in orientation...

The general consensus is that local authorities are not seen as 'natural' at bringing people together, either by the authorities themselves or by local stakeholders. In addition, this

potential role bringing people together comes up against a lack of synergy and often even tensions and conflicts between stakeholders whose interests may objectively be contradictory.

Some stakeholders in the cultural sector, for example, find there is little point holding discussions with economic stakeholders. And the same can just as easily be observed in reverse. This situation does not always apply in other countries.

For want of holding an open debate between all stakeholders, local authorities have seen their international policies suffer from a lack of exposure and clarity, resulting in:

- very few cross-cutting relations between stakeholders other than local authorities, and those existing resulting in few alliances and little action despite solid intentions and aspirations;
- relations between regional stakeholders and local authorities being limited at best to a financial relationship, where the council contributes towards funding initiatives which they implement.

Choosing not to work with other regional stakeholders, even the regional authorities, may also be a deliberate decision based on different approaches and/or interests.

...whereas working together can be very productive.

Businesses have observed that international relations in the areas in which they have operations offer one way to develop international relations, even expand into international markets.

"When a region, a local authority has an active, dynamic, resolutely aggressive policy to promote its own area, it is a great asset for us as businesses."

Christophe Cizeron, Deputy Managing Director, GL Events

Conversely, these relations enable local stakeholders to act as 'ambassadors' in their international dealings, raising awareness and promoting local expertise.

"The mountain cluster is an association which aims to support French mountain planning stakeholders. They sought us out. One of the companies in this cluster was on the point of signing a deal worth several hundreds of millions of Euros to develop ski stations in China for the Olympic Games in 2022 and they needed a positive institutional framework to be in place between the two cities in order to facilitate the situation. For Chambéry, the advantage was twofold: helping build positive relations with businesses in our local area but also bringing together all those who have a stake in a city which will host the Olympic Games."

Samuel Caillaut, Youth, Student Services and International relations Director, city of Chambéry

This nevertheless requires a long-term commitment to relations between local authorities and to make this work clear, to plan ahead and to have an effective strategy.

Today, whether it is a question of 'importing' local public policy which has already been tried and tested by others, consolidating policies to raise an area's attractiveness and profile to attract investment, promote local businesses or gain recognition for expertise, developing an image as a cultural or eco-friendly city or region, or a scientific centre of excellence, supporting solidarity, offering institutional support or addressing the economic requirements of partners in unstable situations, the changes in local authority international policies have led to greater participation and coordination among all stakeholders.

Similarly, regional stakeholders, as part of their international work, have agreed to work closely with local authorities on shared interests, despite the fact that a great deal of reciprocal ignorance remains regarding their respective practices.

Prospects: what does the future hold for external action of local authorities?

Local authority officials need to be able to look to their professional futures

A local, national and international context which urges action...

At a local level, even the most recent decentralisation processes have established local authorities as prominent institutions, constantly seeking recognition from their citizens in the name of good modern governance and a supposed shared identity.

"Throughout Africa, people have a strong sense of belonging to the town where they live."

Boubacar Bah, Chairman of AMM,
Vice-Chair of CCT UEMOA

Despite the fact that they are indeed the place where the internationalisation local areas begins and is played out, local authorities struggle to gain acknowledgement in the world of international cooperation, often failing to appraise the legal barriers which stand in the way of them being fully recognised as international operators in an inter-state world.

"Local authorities are not recognised as having a part to play in international development."

Adrien Licha, project officer, Platforma

However, local authorities are increasingly faced with the same problems and are where the impact of globalisation is felt most strongly.

"The mayor of Beirut faces the same problem dealing with household waste as the mayor of Marseille or Barcelona. We are all equal when it comes to the problems we face."

Bernard Valero, Ambassador,
Director of the AVITEM public interest group

... despite the fact that we are at the end of an EALA cycle.

EALA, understood as decentralised development cooperation, is today being completely redesigned.

"You can imagine a scenario where decentralised cooperation in the form of traditional aid will cease to exist."

Jean-Jacques Gabas, Honorary Chair of GEMDEV

These changes in EALA can be seen through the increase, greater diversity and complexity of regional internationalisation. It can also be observed through tensions between addressing global issues (climate change, security, economic development, fighting poverty, etc.) and local issues (developing attractiveness, profile, etc.) which results in being torn between a frame of reference based on humanity, solidarity and a frame of reference based on specific local interest.

Prioritising awareness, understanding and dissemination of the changes in external action of local authorities.

Identifying, analysing and disseminating information and knowledge of these changes and their impact is a priority today if we want internationalisation to have an effective impact on balanced development at a local, national and international level.

Indeed, we can observe that:

- the majority of local authorities from the South are not aware of changes in the external action of French local authorities and are stuck with the image of decentralised cooperation from the 1990s, which leads to misunderstandings between partner local authorities as well as a failure to understand requests by local authorities from the South to establish new relations

- Beyond the clear ambition to renew EALA practices, the latter have been given no or little value, leading to wasted efforts through the lack of an effective exchange of practices.

It is vital to establish a 'watchdog', less in relation to quantitative aspects than to identifying and understanding the current dynamics (new forms of international action, new stakeholders, new types of funding, etc.), in order to be able to support the work of local authorities and offer help with local issues as much as with national and global issues.

A duty to help create EALA of the future in order to address the issues of our world

This opens up new scope for support to local authorities and their networks, regional stakeholders as well as state and supranational authorities with the aim of inventing and spreading new forms of external action. This support prioritises national and regional networks.

This renewed support to local authorities is vital to ensure they, and their stakeholders can contribute, alongside international organisations, states and civil society, towards building a world based on justice, peace and well-being, while working tirelessly towards building more inclusive local communities.

"We should change the title of the symposium, from the unstoppable internationalisation of cities and regions, to the essential internationalisation of cities and regions."

Bernard Valero,
Ambassador, Director of the AVITEM public interest group

A short glossary of the terms used during the symposium and in this document

This glossary is not designed to set a definition for the terms used, rather to explain the meaning attributed to them during the symposium and in this document.

Term	Suggested definition
External Action of Local Authorities (EALA)	All the relations and work carried out by one or more local authority with or towards other regions and their stakeholders in other countries.
International Action of Local Authorities	Idem
Decentralised cooperation	Agreement between two or more local authorities from different countries.
Decentralised development cooperation	Agreement between two or more local authorities from different countries with the aim of contributing towards the development of regions from the South and their local authorities.
City diplomacy	A commitment made by local governments worldwide to each other to help solve disputes which affect them and build long-lasting peace.
Attractiveness	An area's ability to attract individuals, groups, institutions or informal organisations, whether lasting or not, for the benefit of the local area.
Prominence / Profile	To appear as a leading local authority in an area or areas of expertise.
Regional marketing	"All the public initiatives carried out by a local authority in the interests of improving or refining its image with target groups which are deemed likely to participate in its development". ¹
Transnationalism	A many-sided, diffuse, uncontrolled and unmanaged process regarding the international dimension between local authorities in different countries: flows and relations linking people, organisations, ideas, images, etc. which cross borders with or without the agreement of states or local authorities, but which influence official international relations.
Local interest	What a local authority expects to gain for itself and/or for its local area from its international action.
Mutual interest	The existence of a relationship which each party finds advantageous, however big and regardless of whether the advantages lie in different domains.
Reciprocity	The idea that two entities working together gain an equivalent beneficial effect from this relationship.
Internationalisation of cities	A dynamic process within a local authority from and/or to foreign regions.

¹ Le Bart 2011, quoted in <http://www.wikiterritorial.cnfpt.fr/xwiki/wiki/econnaissances/view/Notions-Cles/Collectivitesterritorialesparametresetenjeuxdelactioninternationale> 2012

The unstoppable internationalisation of cities and regions. *Issues - Trends - Prospects.*

This document is the result of research conducted, as part of an agreement between Cités Unies France and CIEDEL, on changes in local authority external action.

It sets out the main points covered during the international symposium held in Lyon on 11th and 12th December 2017 entitled 'the unstoppable internationalisation of cities and regions: issues, trends, prospects'.

Confronting different perspectives from practitioners, researchers and institutional decision-makers, this research process, begun in 2014, aims to help raise awareness and understand more accurately the changes underway.

It opens up prospects both in terms of action and lines of inquiry.

For further information (in French) about the research, go to:
www.ciedel.org/nos-projets/

