



The full interview from ICLEI publication Connections #39, which focuses on the upcoming Rio+20 Conference.

Brice Lalonde, Executive Coordinator for Rio+20 is in the hotseat.

What role do you see for local governments in implementing sustainable development?

Local governments are probably the main actor in implementing sustainable development. Any regional, national or State regulation has to be implemented at the local level. Besides, half of the world population lives in cities. Local governments have prescriptive and financial powers, they have means of implementation, they have democratic legitimacy, they can start a lot of policies bottom up in a world where it is difficult to have 190 countries to agree on a top down regulation.

Sustainable development is about shared responsibility but sometimes it is easier to talk about global governance than to change our own behavior. Can you give us an example of your most important personal “transition” to sustainable development?

I gave up having a car.

What can ‘green urban economy’ mean in the European context? Why do we need this concept, is sustainable development not enough?

We could say it’s part of the implementation of sustainable development in cities. It addresses the relationship between the metabolism of the city and the environment.

Local Agenda 21, a mandate stemming from the first Rio Summit, inspired thousands of cities worldwide to act for sustainable development. What can we expect from Rio+20?

As for Agenda 21, we could reprint it, assess its legacy, update it, if needed, and understand why some of the recommendations have not been implemented. But we could also build a coalition of cities, businesses, universities and citizens moving together to sustainable development.