

Need for local communities to engage in advocacy for climate protection at regional and higher levels

Ann Hancock, Climate Protection Campaign, December 2009

Introduction

Not all sources and causes of climate change are under local authority; neither are all of the solutions. For example, local governments do not control fuel efficiency standards for vehicles even through these standards greatly impact local production of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Because local communities are often adversely impacted by outside forces, they must either suffer the consequences or they must act to change those adverse impacts.

Additionally, every solution has what is known in economic circles as an opportunity cost. In other words, if an investment of a scarce resource such as time, attention, funds or a combination of them is made for one solution, then this investment will not be made for a different solution. Making choices about the allocation of scarce resources is inherent in all facets of life.

In the realm of climate protection, local communities must not only determine where at the local level to invest scarce resources, but also they must determine whether they should look beyond the local level to try to effect outside forces that impact them adversely. Where can local communities allocate their limited time, attention, and funds to produce the biggest, fastest, most positive change to protect the climate?

A critical question such as this deserves a response based on rigorous, thorough analysis. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this project.

A brief overview of four selected studies and their conclusions follows. The intent of this overview is to suggest courses for further research and considerations for those working at the local level in making resource allocation decisions regarding climate protection.

Review of selected literature

“Global Local: Responding to Climate Change Concerns from the Ground Up,” Robert W. Kates and Thomas J. Wilbanks, Environment, April 2003.

Authors analyze the range of actions that impact the production of GHG emissions. The article is based on three years of research funded by NASA. A detailed table in the article organizes and evaluates actions. The table’s format is summarized below to suggest the authors’ analysis. (Each of the categories shown in the first row has at least three sub-categories in the actual table.)

Scale domains of climate change and consequences

Level	Driving forces	Emissions/ Sink Changes	Radiative Forcing	Climate Change	Impacts	Responses
Global						
Regional						
Large Area						
Local						

The authors display their findings from their study of four communities to show opportunities for GHG emissions reductions. Opportunities are rated as large (L), moderate (M), small (S), negligible (N), not estimated (N/A), or are shown as a range.

Opportunities for GHG emissions reductions

Sector	IPCC (Global)	DOE (National)	ICLEI (Local)	GCLP* (Local)
Buildings	L	M-S	L	S
Industry	M-L	M	M-L	S-L
Transportation	M	M	M-L	M
Agriculture	M	N/A	N/A	L-N
Waste	S	N/A	S-L	N/A
Energy	M	L-M	N/A	L

* Global Change in Local Places

The authors conclude, "...the beguiling slogan 'Think globally and act locally' is insufficient to deal with climate change and its causes and consequences. Climate change is a global phenomenon, but global or even national 'thinking' averages together too many distinctive local trajectories of greenhouse gas emissions and their driving forces, missing opportunities to reduce emissions and making local action less specific. But local 'thinking' is also insufficient for action because, for the most part, decisions about major emissions-reducing actions are made far from the local community."

The authors list three imperatives for success, summarized as make the global local, look beyond the local, and act globally to act locally. They conclude that local action to combat climate change will remain "...a tantalizing dream unless government and business leaders at national and global scales are willing to give local communities more control over their activities, to develop more persuasive rewards for emission reduction initiatives, and to give communities technology options and other tools suited for local conditions."

"Critical Cooling," Laura Tam et. al., San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, February 2009, www.spur.org/publications/library/report/critical_cooling

Authors studied San Francisco's climate protection efforts. They noted that the City, an early climate protection leader in the nation, is not meeting its GHG emission goals. They analyzed forty-two options to reduce emissions in the transportation, energy and waste sectors to determine how much it would cost the City to reduce

one metric ton of carbon dioxide through each option. Many of the policy options they considered reduce emissions beyond San Francisco's borders.

The authors found that the vast majority (and earlier version of the study estimates this majority to be about 90%) of the most promising, cost-effective measures to reduce San Francisco's GHG emissions are not under local control. The top recommendation of this study is for a course-correction for the City, to "leverage its participation in regional land use and transportation planning entities, and advocate for policy changes at the state level to achieve economies of scale in reducing emissions."

"Applying California's AB 32 targets to the regional level: A study of San Diego County greenhouse gases and reduction strategies," Scott J. Anders et. al., *Energy Policy* 37 (2009) 2831–2835, Elsevier, April 2009.

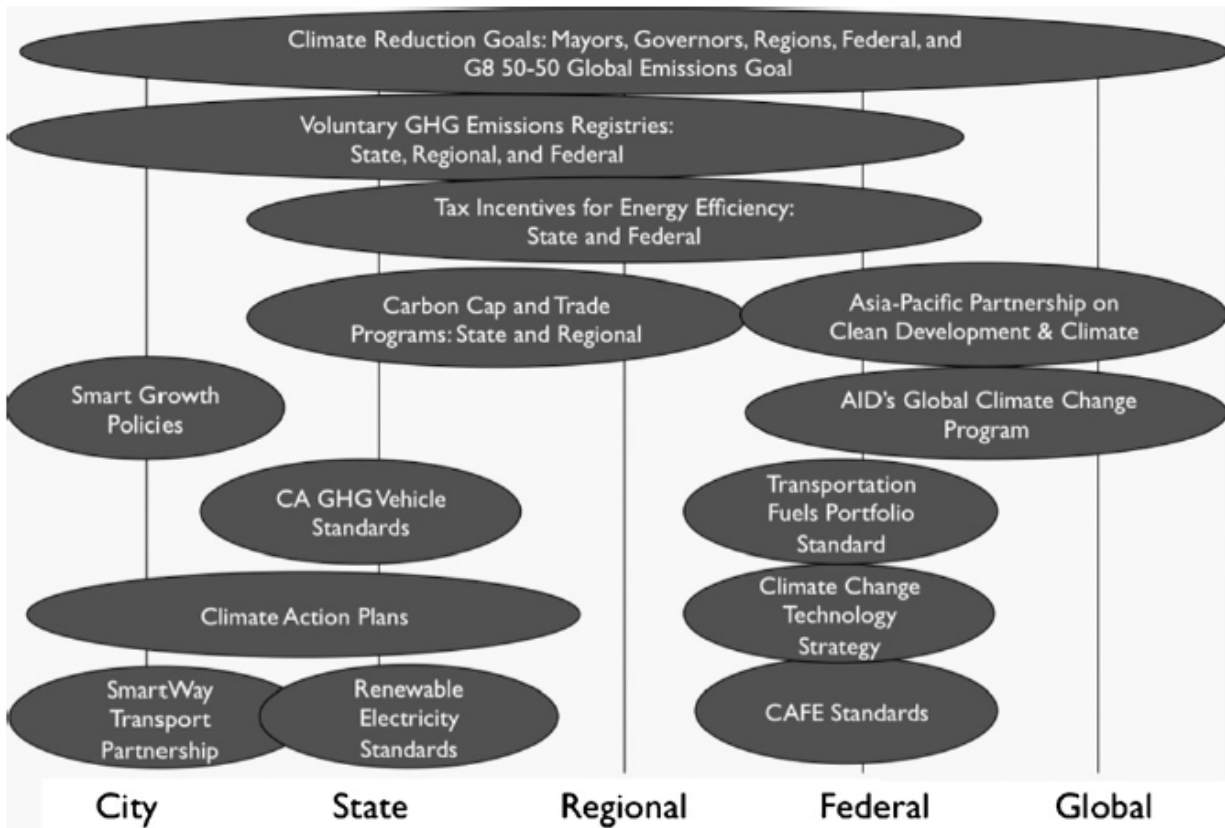
The authors applied a combination of 21 existing or pending state GHG reduction mandates and feasible regional measures. Their study found that a combination of state and local measures will be required to achieve state GHG reduction targets defined by AB32. Further they found that State mandates produce larger GHG reductions than do local measures. Nevertheless they conclude that local regions retain control over a fairly significant portion of reductions, and remain important actors in the achievement of State GHG emission reduction targets.

"Scaling the policy response to climate change," Benjamin K. Sovacool and Marilyn A. Brown, Elsevier, *Policy and Society* 27, 317–328, 2009.

http://www.spp.nus.edu.sg/docs/fac/benjamin-sovacool/Published%20Papers/Sovacool_Brown-Scaling.pdf

Authors of this study assessed the advantages and disadvantages of fighting climate change through local, bottom-up strategies as well as global, top-down approaches. After noting that each scale of action—the local and the global—has distinct costs and benefits, the authors explore the importance of scale. Authors conclude that local thinking must be coupled with global and national scales of action in order to achieve the levels of carbon dioxide reductions needed to avoid dangerous climate impacts.

Authors created the following model to show the multiple and overlapping scales of jurisdiction in U.S. Climate Policy.



Summary of Conclusions

- 'Think globally, act locally' is insufficient to deal with climate change and its causes and consequences.
- To achieve an aggressive local target a local government must leverage its participation in regional land use and transportation planning entities, and advocate for policy changes at the state level to achieve economies of scale in reducing emissions.
- A combination of state and local measures will be required to achieve state GHG reduction targets defined by AB32.
- State measures produce larger GHG reductions than do local measures.
- Local thinking must be coupled with global and national scales of action in order to achieve the levels of carbon dioxide reductions needed to avoid dangerous climate impacts.

Local communities committed to achieving local GHG emission reduction targets must engage in advocating for change at regional, state and national levels.