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The leading role of cities in public and private discourses on urban climate governance

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Abstract

The paper analyses how the discourse on climate governance is re-worked in the urban context. It does so in order to better understand the meaning and possible impact of a growing rhetoric that proclaims the leadership in terms of climate governance of cities that are transitioning towards sustainable futures. By using an approach that employs critical discourse analysis, it examines the institutional climate governance discourse issued by public and private actors in the city of Barcelona, and compares it with the locally-contextualised discourses issued by these same actors during the Car-Free Day campaigns in 2005, 2012 and 2015. The objective is to analyse if private and public discourses internalise and take on the city's leadership discourse and transfer it to urban climate governance. The comparative examination of texts released by public and private actors points to the discursive strategies of climate governance at the city level taking on meanings that are more descriptive than normative. The paper claims that this has implications for expectations regarding the city's leadership in transitions towards sustainable futures.

Keywords

Urban climate governance, city, public actors, private actors, critical discourse analysis

Introduction

When Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement, the mayor of Philadelphia tweeted: "Philly is committed to upholding at local level the same commitment made by the US in the Paris climate agreement."[1] The city became a symbol of an urban discourse that distanced itself from the logic of denial of the new American administration, by framing climate change policies in the local context. This fact, symptomatic of a reinforced role for cities in the transition towards sustainability, seemed to confirm what the literature has been pointing out over the last decade: that cities are emerging as key actors in global climate governance, partly displacing the central role attributed to state actors, but also exposing the difficulties in living up to the rhetoric espoused (Bulkeley, 2010,

2017; Okereke et al., 2009). This literature has examined how climate change is governed in the city, the institutional arrangements needed for urban leadership to be successful in providing global climate responses, and the various pitfalls that cities might encounter along the way. Newell et al. propose the notion of "governance traps" on the urban scale "where cities are now increasingly charged with responding to climate change, but often under conditions where they lack the capacities and resources to adequately address these challenges" (Newell et al., 2015: 536). We know that cities are being called on to play a key role in global climate governance, and we also know that many acknowledge this leadership role in their rhetoric despite the pitfalls and limitations that they still need to overcome. But less is known about how this discourse is actually internalised by the different actors involved in urban climate governance. This paper seeks to address this gap by examining how the discourse is re-worked for a local sustainable mobility event. It compares the consolidated climate governance discourses of public and private actors with the discourses they issue during a city event, in order to see if the locally-framed discourses are consistent with the rhetoric regarding the leadership of cities in climate governance.

When the leadership of cities is proclaimed with such fanfare, there is considerable pressure exerted on public institutions, on the companies linked to them, and on citizens. If we take this into account, the gap that is addressed here is an important one. This pressure can generate two related challenges at the very least. Firstly, citizens, local governments and companies must incorporate the leadership discourse into their decisions and actions, and transfer it to urban climate governance, perhaps taking on burdens that have been neglected by other, higher levels of governance. We should be cautious about the way that urban framing can alleviate the degree of responsibilities of other levels of governance, and might even legitimise these other levels scaling down their own actions if it becomes generally accepted that the urban context is more effective in driving the sustainability transition. Secondly, cities need to have the capacity to lead global climate governance. Both these challenges imply social, political, corporate and institutional arrangements on different scales. In our opinion, the discourse that proclaims the leadership of cities in climate issues is part of a rhetoric that could jeopardise other questions that are fundamental for climate governance. If this discourse does not reflect the city's real capacity to lead sustainability transitions, it not only sets unreasonable expectations with respect to the city, but can also lessen expectations at the state or global level. Besides, this discourse does not only set expectations for the local government, but for all urban climate governance actors, from citizens to related companies. These actors will need to incorporate the discourse and engage in coherent global climate responses. The analysis of climate governance discourse in the urban context can reveal how these expectations are internalised by different actors in the city, since we already know that climate governance discourses are moulded according to the interests of those who produce them (Dewulf, 2013; Nisbet et al., 2013). This analysis can provide evidence about how realistic this discourse is in terms of engaging different urban climate governance actors in the rhetoric of leadership.

Using an approach that employs critical discourse analysis, the paper analyses and compares the institutional climate discourse issued by public and private actors in the city of Barcelona with the locally-contextualised discourses that these same actors issued during campaigns for Car-Free Day in 2005, 2012 and 2015. The objective is to identify if there are changes in the discourse caused by these campaigns and, if so, what these changes can tell us about urban climate governance and how the leadership role of the city is internalised by different actors. Car-Free Day is one of the most popular sustainable mobility actions within the proposals of EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK, an initiative promoted at the European level by a partnership between local authority networks and national and European coordinators. The campaign has different meanings in urban and rural contexts, and in dispersed city environments that are heavily dependent on private cars, compared to compact cities where everyday life is developed around public transport (Corfee-Morlot et al., 2009). In this way, Car-Free Day takes on different forms and discourses in each urban context

within which it is implemented, and for each climate governance model under which it is negotiated, designed, developed and disseminated. By looking at how public and private actors re-work their climate discourses when they reframe them within an urban event such as Car-Free Day, this paper seeks to unveil the different meanings taken on by the discourse concerning the city's leadership in climate governance. Our claim is that the reframing of discourse can expose how these actors internalise the urban leadership regarding global climate responses, by providing evidence of how they actually address urban climate governance in their discourse. This will first require an examination of the literature that helps understand how this discourse is constructed in the urban context, and what we already know about its implications for cities and their role in sustainability transitions.

Cities, discourse and climate governance

In her analysis of how climate change is governed in cities, Bulkeley states: "urban governance of climate change is constituted through a myriad of public and private actors (operating across different scales and through multiple networks) and mediated through sociotechnical infrastructure systems and, in the process, is creating an arena in which what it means to act in response to climate change is being defined and, with it, what it means to have authority to govern" (Bulkeley, 2010: 248). The urban governance of climate change defines the roles of the actors involved, and sets out how they engage in climate change responses in the city. The city frames not only decision making, but also the environmental discourse around those decisions (Boyd and Juhola, 2014; Juhola et al., 2011). To further this theoretical premise, here follows a characterisation of the discursive processes around urban climate governance, particularly around sustainable mobility decisions and policies for sustainability transitions.

Sustainable mobility connects a wide range of issues, including urban planning in the city, public space management models, and the reorientation of transport strategies towards demand, supply or both (Banister, 2011). In practice, this means that in certain urban contexts, sustainable mobility consists of adopting measures that guarantee efficient, reliable transport that safeguards the public's health as well as the environment. In some contexts, these measures prioritise social equality and the reclaiming of public space for pedestrians. In others, investments are made towards infrastructure, or financial measures are introduced, such as tolls, parking meters, limits for polluting vehicles, or incentives for those who drive less. Sustainable mobility involves urban climate governance challenges in which different networks of actors agree upon a set of policies within a wide range of options for climate change mitigation and adaptation. In order to overcome these challenges, ideas regarding transition and transformation have emerged that focus on the ecological, social and technical urban dimensions that are needed for substantive change to take place (Boyd and Juhola, 2014). The study of urban sustainability transitions commonly addresses the role of the urban social system within the complex global climate governance scheme by examining technological developments and infrastructure issues (Hodson et al., 2017; Hodson and Marvin, 2010) and the institutions needed to provide them (Bulkeley, 2010). Other studies have addressed transition and transformation through the lens of discourse by focusing on the ideas, values and institutional logics that frame governance. These studies have shown how the discursive framing of urban climate governance shapes decision making, and guides climate change mitigation and adaptation policies (Bosomworth, 2018).

During the literature review that was carried out to learn from discursive strategies and framing in urban climate governance, and in the course of the research process itself, certain governance discourses have come forth as widely acknowledged both in theory and in practice. Two governance discourses have been selected to critically examine how the urban framing of them leads to distinct discursive strategies: climate governance as information-action (CGIA) and climate governance as

participation-decision (CGPD). These two discourses have been chosen because: (1) they offer different ideas of how to manage sustainable mobility through a choice of specific policy instruments; (2) they involve different institutional logics, ideas and values that can be discerned by critically analysing their discourse; (3) their communication strategies use recognisable keywords and their rhetoric has been widely studied in the governance literature; (4) they embody different approaches regarding the role of the city in sustainability transitions.

One initial feature that characterises the two discourses relates to Kooiman et al.'s interactive governance model, that 'emphasizes solving societal problems and creating societal opportunities through interactions among civil, public and private actors' and 'proceeds from the assumption that societies are governed by a combination of governing efforts' (Kooiman et al., 2008: 2). The interactive governance model is a spectrum of different structures of interactions between governmental and non-governmental actors. Within this spectrum, the CGIA discourse advocates for top-down steering and implementation in the form of policies and law, while the CGPD discourse implies interaction, with different actors leading and coordinating opportunities for co-governance or public-private partnerships.

The information provided in the CGIA discourse develops around the recipient, with a tailored message that serves the corporate and public institutional ideology and strategy. This discourse has been analysed in particular by the literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and on stakeholder-oriented communication. Discursive strategies in this scenario serve a relationship structure that is based on timely communication aimed at commercial (Sen et al., 2006) and ideological objectives (Dobers and Springett, 2010). The content is oriented to influence a specific behaviour on the part of the stakeholder, without necessarily expecting their implication in the governance process (Barone et al., 2000). Critics of this type of strategy question the true effectiveness of CSR in social and environmental governance. They claim that the voluntary nature of CSR strategies leads corporations to use them as mere marketing or institutional communication campaigns (Singh et al., 2008; Windsor, 2013).

Here we provide an illustration of how the CGIA discourse operates, taking the example of Car-Free Day. The discourse around the event can promote civic activities for specific groups, such as street education workshops for the responsible and safe use of vehicles, or bike-promotion campaigns which discourage the use of cars in the city. Although in the first case the focus is on safety and in the second on sustainable mobility, both strategies are target-specific, with a client/user orientation. In both cases, actions for Car-Free Day only build their meanings in the urban context for certain groups, according to their age, ideological orientation, profession, or other factors. Neither of the two previous examples of discourse would be expected to be activated, for example, for the group of professional drivers in the logistics and distribution sectors, or that of elderly or senior drivers, since the target groups of the discourse are other stakeholders. The fundamental objectives are to disseminate information and to create perceptions and opinions among key groups which will then determine how climate change governance translates into sustainable mobility actions, based on each individual stakeholder and context.

The CGPD discourse progresses from being tailored to targeting users to being aimed at the problems of society as a whole. There is an appearance of credibility, and the development of a trust-building discourse and the ideas of commitment and responsibility (Christensen et al., 2015). Car-Free Day can be developed in this scenario as a general environmental communications campaign that provides the opportunity to explain (or acknowledge) the commitments, values and actions that govern climate change policies in the city. For example, Car-Free Day can be held during a Safe Green Mobility Week or as part of a Sustainable Mobility Week. The framing of Car-Free Day in the first case could entail, for instance, campaigns to replace polluting cars with more modern cars that allow for cleaner air in the city, but without necessarily questioning car use. In the second case, the framing could promote collective transport as a way of reducing car use.

This discursive strategy integrates the general idea of decision making through the use of terms and concepts related to interdependence, value creation or mutual benefit (Schultz et al., 2013). Car-Free Day goes from being an awareness campaign to creating an opportunity for dialogue and debate, offering opportunities for reflection, coordinated actions between different groups, and networking for long-term action. In this scenario, the discourse can open up debates about controversial issues in the city, such as the super-blocks that offer a transformative model at multiple levels through the withdrawal of motor vehicles and the civic appropriation of public space (Mueller et al., 2020).

By acknowledging CGIA and CGPD discourses, the paper also focuses on consolidated discursive strategies that can be recognised in the public and private discourses as possible representations of how different actors address urban climate governance and give meaning to it. Building on the urban climate governance literature, this section has examined Car-Free Day as a sustainable mobility action that varies in each city and with each urban climate governance model, and can thus provide an adequate context for studying changing discursive strategies. Ultimately, the objective is to reveal whether these possible changes open up debates about roles in climate governance. The following section describes the methodological approach used to examine what locally-framed discourse can tell us about climate governance and the city's leadership in it.

Methodology

The research adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the discourses on climate governance of public and private actors in Barcelona on the occasion of Car-Free Day for the 2005, 2012 and 2015 campaigns, and those outside that context. CDA provides a systematic approach to analysing the role of language in society and its influence in meaning-making processes. It regards discourse as a form of social practice and takes into account the institutional and social contexts within which it is constituted (Fairclough, 1992). The methodology has been increasingly embraced in the study of environmental problems, in particular by the research on the framing of climate change and climate governance. The works of Carvalho are of particular interest for the purposes of this study, as she points at the responsibility of discourses in producing, reproducing and transforming particular values and worldviews, especially those that concern complex scientific issues such as climate change. In her method, we see how linguistic choices and the use of certain terms and keywords can contribute, for example, to depicting climate science as a consensual and reliable domain, and scientists as the dominant social actors in climate change issues or, instead, can contribute to highlighting values such as individualism and market liberalism as dominant discourses that challenge scientific actors in order to introduce climate change scepticism (Carvalho, 2007).

In adopting Carvalho's CDA approach, this paper acknowledges the time plane in discourse analysis, the discursive strategies of social actors, and the effects of discourse (Carvalho, 2008). The analysis of discourse in three different Car-Free Day campaigns within a 10-year time span seeks to account for contextual changes and their possible effects. The three campaigns have been selected to coincide with three mandates that correspond to different positions in the political spectrum. This will allow us to identify and isolate the changes in discourse due to the urban context or due to the possible effect of the politicisation of environmental discourse (Bolsen et al., 2014; Coffey and Joseph, 2012; McCright and Dunlap, 2011). The research also considers different discursive strategies by examining texts issued by public and private actors. This seeks to account for the different levels of discursive intervention that contribute to constructing climate governance in the city. Finally, this paper claims that discourse has an impact on the role of the city in climate governance and helps shape it. In order to unveil these discursive effects, the research examines the

way that discourse is structured by comparing the climate discourse during Car-Free Day with the discourse found outside the scope of this campaign.

The sample of texts has been chosen based on the above methodological considerations, that is, the selection of three specific time periods within a 10-year timeline, the distinction between public and private discourses, and the inclusion of texts constructed by the actors in different discursive positions (during and not during Car-Free Day). Each Car-Free Day campaign selected (2005, 2012, 2015) belongs to different political and economic stages of the city, and they constitute three "critical discourse moments" that involve specific happenings that can challenge "established" discursive positions (Carvalho, 2008: 166).

The research analyses 39 selected texts that have been published on the official Barcelona City Council websites and on the official corporate websites of three companies: Grupo Agbar, Grupo Gas Natural, and Mango. The three companies selected are all based in the metropolitan region of Barcelona and they all fund Sustainability Chairs within urban governance schemes involving the local government and different academic institutions. They publish sustainability reports according to the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative), the protocol most frequently adopted by Spanish companies as a homogeneous transparency framework (Ortiz and Marin, 2014). The three companies are involved in the water services, energy services, and retail clothing sectors, respectively.

The selected texts include 18 texts of *non-event discourse,* defined as the discourse used in open institutional communications, i.e., not oriented to the specific study topic, but published as part of the general environmental communication strategy of the public and private actors. The remaining 21 texts are ones of *event discourse,* defined as discourse elaborated within the framework of the specific actions of Car-Free Day. They comprise (in equal proportion) sustainability reports, press releases and interviews with representatives of the city council and the selected companies.

The CDA combines two related levels of study: the comparative analysis of the different representations of climate governance set out by the different actors in each given campaign; and the comparative analysis of the discursive constructions of climate governance in 2005, 2012 and 2015. The following section shows how these analyses have led to the characterisation of discourse at different times and in different contexts.

Results

This section begins by presenting the main features of the analysed texts and their contexts. During the 10-year period being studied, Barcelona City Council was under three different mandates, each with a very different ideological position on the political spectrum. Until 2011, the city was governed by a coalition of centre-left and nationalist parties. After 32 years in power, this coalition lost to the main centre-right Catalan nationalist formation. This formation governed until May 2015, when the left regained power, but on this occasion in the form of a citizen platform constituted as a political party. The 3 years selected for the study also belong to three economic cycles. The 2002–2007 cycle is considered an expansive period in the Catalan region. The financial crash of 2007 and the subsequent economic crisis in Spain have been analysed as having a decoupling effect of the Catalan region from the eurozone, leading to the region's slower recovery up until 2012 and the subsequent return to a downward trend by 2013 (Sala et al., 2014). Another feature in the texts analysed refers to the framing and design of Car-Free Day, as well as the choice of actions and activities organised around it. The presentation of the results starts with the analysis of texts released by private and public actors not within any Car-Free-Day campaigns and that thus represent an institutional climate discourse that can be valid beyond the urban framing of the event. This is followed by the analysis of texts that were specifically released on the occasion of Car-Free Days.

Climate governance in non-event discourses

The critical analysis starts by studying the institutional discourse of private actors, and indicates that the climate discourse in corporate communication materials tends to use varying strategies to avoid defining leading roles in climate governance. On the one hand, no particular actors are pointed out as dominant in climate governance; when references are indeed made to responsible actors, the texts simply refer to *stakeholders*, a recurrent linguistic device used to neutralise specific responsibilities and commitments. As exemplified by the excerpts from the Agbar and Gas Natural CSR reports and press releases (Table 1), the discourse that is created implies social challenge and collective responsibility, and leadership is expected to come from all actors in *society*.

Table 1. Excerpts of private actors' non-event discourse.

	Grupo Agbar/Suez	Grupo gas natural/fenosa	Mango
2005	"For the Agbar group, which provides services to citizens, the integration of CSR into its governance strategy is essential. The contribution of many is necessary to work from co-responsibility, a term that summarizes our challenges: Sustainable development will only be possible if all the actors involved make a commitment. "	"One of the fundamental principles that govern the gas natural Group's actions in relation to society is respect for the environment. Because of this, the company has developed an environmental policy that can guarantee the best performance and that is committed to technological innovation to consolidate its sustainability project."	"There are a set of external factors that drive progress towards CSR, including the demand for transparency. But the real boost must come from within, from the corporate culture itself through identification, dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders. " *Interview with Mr. Xavier Carbonell, Director Department of Corporate Social Responsibility*
2012	"Evidence that corporate responsibility is a principle present at all times within the company is that a new medium-term corporate responsibility plan has been drawn up for the years 2012–2017 in which we have updated the commitments with stakeholders, and the actions and objectives assigned to each of them."	"The incorporation into the business world of concepts such as sustainable development, the fight against climate change and biodiversity is clear to see. The company feels identified with these three concepts, fully aware of their importance in our society."	"There are huge companies in Spain within our sector, and without a doubt, I know that concern about caring for environment is ever present. But it never hurts to consider objectives for improvement that can be achieved with strong commitment and the involvement of the company at all levels." *Interview with Ms. Beatriz Bayo, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility*
2015	"This commitment materializes in the triple axis of "people-planet-company". People: To provide quality of life, we need to consolidate social involvement and raise awareness about the use sustainable resources."	"Energy companies must ensure committed and responsible actions in the protection of the environment and the use of natural resources, both in our production processes and those of our suppliers, and of course, in the ways our clients and society in general consume."	"Our priority is to respond to the expectations and demands of our stakeholders through a fluid and transparent dialogue." *Interview with Ms. Beatriz Bayo, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility*

On the other hand, climate change is never contested, but is constructed as one of many social issues that the company acknowledges within its social responsibilities. This neutral nature of institutional private discourse persists over the years, even through major corporate changes such as the merger of Gas Natural and Fenosa in 2008, and the acquisition of Agbar by Suez in 2014, with the local political context or the global economic situation appearing to have no effect on it either. The excerpts from interviews with Mango's heads of CSR in Table 1 show how the discourse remains constant over the years, even with different people in charge.

Conversely, the institutional discourse of public actors shifts with the changing contexts; however, using only these data it cannot be inferred that the changing discursive strategies are due to the ideologies dominant at each moment within the city council. What the changes do confirm is that the context affects the discourse of public actors in different ways. In 2005, the climate governance discourse issued by the city council was constructed as management, policy implementation, and efficiency, as shown by the excerpts in Table 2.

2005 marked the last stage of the long-running predominance of the Socialists in Barcelona City Council. The importance given in discourse to the effectiveness of the local government might reflect a defence strategy against a critical opposition that had been pushing for change, using arguments about lack of innovation. Indeed, 2012 saw the centre-right that had led the opposition for years come into power, and the institutional climate discourse took a turn towards innovation and regeneration, aligning its rhetoric with the arguments that had been used to oppose the former climate governance model. Similarly, the discourse shifted again in 2015, coinciding with the political turn to the left with the victory of *Barcelona en Comu´*, a democratic citizen platform with a citizen-focused agenda. Under its mandate, the discourse emphasised the voices of actors by explicitly naming them and calling for their collective leadership, a strategy that had not been employed in 2005 or 2012 (Table 2).

Table 2. Excerpts of public actors' non-event discourse.

	Barcelona city council
2005	"In order to obtain different results, we need an organization that can blend concepts in order to create global solutions, and that follows the principles of prevention, promotion, good functioning of the services, efficient management and non-misuse." " Since 1995, the environmental management has been carrying out a series of actions in the specific field of sustainable mobility that are intended, on the one hand, to raise citizens' awareness so that they make more efficient use of the different types of transport and, on the other hand, to support councils in studies and projects that improve the mobility in their territory while influencing the planning and policies of municipal mobility"
2012	"In order to guarantee barcelona becoming an efficient, productive, and zero-emission city, the aim is to innovate, regenerate the city through the energy rehabilitation of buildings and homes, starting with public buildings. Thermally insulate buildings, improve thermal and lighting installations, use efficient equipment, produce energy in the building itself. To ensure the well-being of people and social cohesion, we need to provide adequate housing for everyone."
2015	To move towards these goals, an initial 2015–2017 roadmap has been defined with a series of projects to be carried out in the next 2 years. The city council brings together different economic and social groups, administrations, companies, agents and social entities and citizens so that, each to the extent of their possibilities, promote actions that promote the mitigation of climate change and the adaptation of our city to soften its impact."

Climate governance in event discourses

Examining texts released on the occasion of Car-Free Days shows how the discourse was re-worked to highlight climate governance as information-action (CGIA) or climate governance as participation-decision (CGPD). In the case of private actors, we analyse press releases and interviews with managers that were published during the period the event took place.

Table 3 highlights keywords and phrases that help identify the focus on CGIA or CGPD found in the different excerpts. In 2005, a director from Grupo Agbar insists on the company's "consolidated information practices" and names specific stakeholders, such as educational centres, in a discursive strategy that is more aligned with CGIA. In 2012, the same director from Mango, who in the non-event discourse spoke very generally about involvement at all company levels, refers to "enormous responsibility" and "sharing knowledge" in an interview during Car-Free Day. During the event, Mango's discourse creates meaning centring around co-responsibility and knowledge sharing that connects with the CGPD discourse. In 2015, a director from Gas Natural aligned their discourse with CGIA, along the same lines as Grupo Agbar, recounting information practices in various environment-related fields. And the same director realigned the discourse with CGPD, with expressions such as "firm commitment" or "alternative solutions" (also highlighted in Table 3).

As for public actors, the analysis includes the event's websites and leaflets, as well as interviews with the mayors. The first element to note is that the discourse is re-worked towards CGIA. Critical discourse analysis reveals a predominant use of the affirmative imperative in all three campaigns. Even the themes selected for each campaign use this form, along with a choice of verbs that encourage action, as the excerpts in Table 4 indicate.

The 2005 Car-Free Day leaflet promotes a set of actions that are predominantly informative and educational, and very general in terms of their targets: an exhibition, a sustainable mobility game and a workshop on safe driving. In 2012, there is a wider offer of activities and, more importantly, each activity on offer seems to be oriented to a particular interest group, especially those who are

Table 3. Excerpts of private discourse during Car-Free-Day.

	Interviews to managers of Agbar, Mango, gas natural
2005	"The Agbar group considers that the aspects related to information, education and communication in the environmental and social spheres are of central importance. We appreciate the real measure that this consolidated informational practice represents as a competitive advantage, and we can highlight that it displays knowledge and understanding of our activities by very diverse stakeholders, among which the following stand out: public administrations, educational establishments (schools, university ...), and some NGOs." *Interview, Mr. Ferran Porta, Corporate Director of Innovation, Environment and Institutional Relations Grupo AGBAR*
2012	"Within our sector, we have an enormous responsibility: Ensuring that the procedures we use are increasingly cleaner from start to finish, and to do this we should encourage greater use of renewable energies, less polluting alternative materials. Sharing knowledge and experiences with other companies, even from other sectors, can also be a very interesting way of doing things." *Interview Ms.Beatriz Bayo, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility Mango*
2015	"For a day like this, we have prepared a set of activities related to energy efficiency and the environment in general. Thus, and as I mentioned before, we plan to launch the new version of the biodiversity report where people can see the main initiatives carried out by the company in relation to the conservation of biodiversity, the preservation of ecosystems and the protection of the natural environment. In addition, we will publish our latest strategies and indicators on climate change mitigation and water management in a new format. " *Interview, Mr. Iba´n Chico, Director of Environment Gas Natural Fenosa*

Table 4. Excerpts of public actors' event discourse. Leaflets from 2005, 2012 & 2015.

	CAR-FREE-DAY leaflets
2005	"The Sustainable and Safe mobility week will take place between 22 and 29 Sep with the theme of 'move wisely'."
	"Another activity that the barcelona city council has proposed is the 'mobility game'. This set of questions and answers on mobility issues has two objectives: on the one hand to raise awareness of sustainable mobility, and on the other to be able to gather information on the knowledge and shortcomings of citizens in this regard. Another proposal is to involve citizens in the nine courses that promote sustainable driving. The courses, which will be taught by RACC professionals, will begin in a pilot phase for 130 people and will be part of the campaign that is called `Take care of me, I will use less fuel' which was launched on Jun 27, and which promotes more sustainable driving."
2012	"Under the theme of 'move in the right direction', barcelona celebrates from 14 to 30 Sep a new edition of the Sustainable and Safe mobility week, which this year aims to find new forms of transport, to get away from the absolute predominance of private cars in favor of other more sustainable transport options in the city."
	"Alternatives to private cars will form part of the bulk of the scheduled activities. An example is the electric vehicle route, which will be held on Sep 14 at 5 p.m., where vehicles from four routes in the Catalan counties will join up in barcelona, about bon pastor, and from there they will travel together through the streets of the city."
2015	"From 11 to 18 Oct barcelona is celebrating a new edition of the Sustainable and Safe mobility week, that with the theme 'Choose.Change.Combine' promotes a search for new ways of getting around that involve moving away from the preeminence of the car in the use and design of public space and evolving towards reliable transport that safeguards the public's health as well as the environment."
	"Barcelona city council, together with around 50 entities in the territory's associative tissue, has scheduled more than a hundred activities in the different spaces that will be closed to traffic, with the aim of citizens enjoying a fun day and at the same time receiving information on the importance of sustainable mobility in the city."

ideologically reluctant to reducing their car use in the city: a technical exhibition about vehicle performance and efficiency (aimed at future car buyers), cultural bike routes (aimed at recreational bike users), a forum about electric vehicles (run by an engineering association) or a workshop on design and mobility (run by a design school). In 2015, there was a radical change both in the nature and the orientation of the activities on offer. They were mostly designed for the general public: car-free streets set up as reading areas and as a football pitch, an exhibition featuring a car scrapyard, or a workshop on electric bicycles.

To a significant extent, just as with the necessarily action-oriented campaign leaflets, the mayors' discourses could be expected to highlight the city's leadership in terms of all the issues at stake. Nevertheless, scrutinising their discourses reveals individual standpoints in relation to urban climate governance that sometimes even contradict the institutional discourse, as shown in Table 5. During the 2005 Car-Free Day, then-mayor Jordi Hereu (centre-left) already explicitly promoted the "growing role of cities", although this type of discourse is not to be found in other event texts. During the 2012 Car-Free Day, then-mayor Xavier Trias (centre-right) called out for Barcelona to be a "leading city" progressing towards sustainability, in contrast with the non-event and event public discourses that focus on specific groups, particularly those who might be reluctant to reduce car use in the city due to economic and ideological implications, as seen earlier. Similarly, during the 2015 campaign Mayor Ada Colau (left) built a strong argument around the role of the city, not only as a leader in global climate governance, but also as an advocating actor within it. As seen before, her individual discourse is not present in the event and institutional texts.

Table 5. Excerpts of public actors' event discourse. Interviews with mayors in 2005, 2012, 2015.

	Barcelona mayors0 discourses
2005	"Barcelona's commitment to the climate is based on the principle of shared responsibility… I would note the growing role of cities, with more or less institutional recognition. It is in cities that you can build some possible solutions to the challenges that arise. " *Interview Jordi Hereu Mayor of Barcelona*
2012	"Today it is more important than ever to have real data to work with, because we are facing a complex situation of sustainability on all fronts. We are at an interesting time in which everyone wants to come to barcelona because we are becoming a leading city, and we need to be able to make our city progress towards sustainability." *Interview Xavier Trias Mayor of Barcelona*
2015	"As cities, we will ask states to make the most ambitious commitment possible to deliver what citizens are demanding, and in addition, cities must work together and with their own agenda." "at the city council we are committed to promoting necessary measures that allow us to move towards a more environmentally sustainable city, one that is more socially just and more livable for its inhabitants." *Interview Ada Colau Mayor of Barcelona*

Discussion

Climate change is one of the crucial concerns in the institutional discourse of public and private actors, and often challenges their communication strategies. Private companies use corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes to systematise and display their climate concerns. Critical analysis of the CSR reports of the companies studied reveals that they have adopted the standardised rhetoric expected in these types of documents (Ortiz and Marin, 2014). In all 3 years and in all three companies, climate governance is built invariably around the general and ambiguous notion that it requires collective commitment and action. These data are consistent with the literature on CSR and the economic crisis, according to which companies have kept their CSR strategies unchanged during the crisis (Oliveira and Capriotti, 2014; Ortas and Moseñe, 2011). The results show that different companies have similar discourses in the different contexts analysed. Conversely, this study shows that different contexts do seem to alter the discourses of public actors. In all cases, the analysed texts engage different interest groups or emphasise different objectives, but the analysis has not identified signs of a predominant debate on the city's role in transitions towards sustainability. This debate is activated in the locally-contextualised discourses, when Car-Free Day provides the opportunity for an urban framing of climate governance discourses.

Critical analysis of the discourses constructed around Car-Free Day show several paths of transformation that reveal how each actor approaches sustainable mobility within their wider frameworks of urban climate governance. The first evidence of discourse re-working arrives with the analysis of private discourses, where rhetorical strategies to reinforce the notion of governance have been identified. The discourse analysis shows that this reframing produces a noticeable shift in private discourse, both towards climate governance as information-action (CGIA) and climate governance as participation-decision (CGPD). The vague notion of social commitment to climate change that was predominant in the not event-related private discourse contrasts with a sense of urgency in the move to sustainable mobility in the locally-contextualised discourse used around Car-Free Day. The analysis of the interviews with managers shows that they justify their contributions to urban climate governance and even refer to specific stakeholders. Another remark concerning event-oriented private discourse is that the economic and political contexts do not seem to have exerted adaptive effects. The discursive transformations around Car-Free Day occur in all

three campaign and in all three companies, with greater use of target-oriented information, as well as participation and decision-making arguments.

The shifts identified in private discourse operate in different ways in the public sphere. The texts released for Car-Free Day by the city council display re-working in each of the three campaigns. A noticeable transformation that occurs in each campaign is that the public discourse adapted to the city event highlights the ideas of opinion, transparency and knowledge over the ideas of dialogue, interaction or jointly-made decisions, in a discursive strategy that seems to be more oriented to CGIA than to CGPD. A possible interpretation is that the city event influences discourse to motivate action and provide use-oriented content and practical information related to the development of Car-Free Day, and is less influential in terms of reframing the discourse to open more general debates around urban climate governance and the roles within it. This interpretation is consistent with the clear way in which the general information websites for the event predominantly use the affirmative imperative in all three campaigns. Another observation that stands out is that each campaign is aligned with its corresponding institutional discourse, indicating the politicisation of discourse as characterised previously: the 2005 campaign had a very general and instrumental character, in line with the prudent and status-quo maintaining policy of that council; in 2012 there was a more energised programme which was clearly target-oriented and innovation-driven, coherent with the arguments that had been used by this government when they formed the opposition; lastly, the 2015 campaign was fundamentally made up of a citizen-oriented menu of activities. The analysis of public texts confirms that the event is discursively transformed as CGIA, while there are no remarkable signs of meaning-creation around the leading role of the city in climate governance. Rather, it affirms that public discourse is faithful to the institutional logics both outside Car-Free Day and during it. There is only one set of texts where this rule needs to be nuanced, and that is in the interviews with the mayors. When interviewed on the occasion of the event, each mayor displayed a visibly transformed discourse that highlighted the leading role of the city, sometimes even contradicting the institutional discourse.

The rhetoric of the leadership of the city is highlighted in the speeches of the mayors, but there is no evidence of it in the climate governance discourses of public and private actors, not even when they re-work the discourse for the city event. On the one hand, private discourse has been shown to operate under its own governance frameworks in compliance with the generally adopted international standards of corporate social responsibility. Private actors' institutional non-event discursive strategies are consistent across campaigns and are not affected by changing political and economic contexts. When private discourses are re-worked for the local event, they enhance the role of specific stakeholders at the city level, namely the public administration, the general public, and educators. However, they do not rebuild the role of private actors in climate governance, as indicated by the fact that their discourse remains aligned with the institutional non-event discursive strategy. The only noticeable difference between institutional and event-framed private discourses is that the latter are issue-tailored and target-oriented. The sustainable mobility event creates an opportunity to showcase the companies' contribution to certain city stakeholders, but in no way does it engage in meaning-creation about the companies' role or about the city's role in urban climate governance. This could confirm the criticism voiced by sceptics that have questioned the true effectiveness of self-governed CSR in social and environmental governance. The lack of regulation of CSR and the way it operates at the voluntary level may work in practice as a mere institutional communication strategy linked to business excellence, environmental monitoring and accountability. But this does not necessarily guarantee a genuine strategic commitment at the political and social levels, beyond economic objectives and within the framework of urban governance networks that could define the city's leadership in the transition toward sustainability. Moreover, the companies' discourses do not seem to internalise the city's leadership in climate governance.

On the other hand, the study of public institutional non-event discourse shows variations for each year studied. The reframing of public institutional discourse over the different political mandates indicates the politicisation of discourse and the moulding of it according to the interests of those who produce it. This has been shown in each discursive adaptation undertaken by each government, especially in 2012 and in 2015, when the respective discourses were aligned with the main arguments used to win the elections. When discourse is reframed for Car-Free Day, it reveals a will to serve specific groups, interests and conjunctures. However, it does not point to the transformative vocation that could be claimed for cities in climate governance, with not even the mayor of Philadelphia's tweet in regard to the role of cities in climate change qualifying as such. The local event reframes discourse by revealing a more instrumental than transformational notion of climate governance.

Conclusions

Through the examination of texts released by public and private actors in Barcelona around three Car-Free Day campaigns and outside them within a 10-year period, this article has revealed that there is a discursive transformation of climate governance. Different re-workings of the climate governance discourse have been shown to depict how climate change is governed in the city rather than the role that can be played by the city in climate governance. This analysis points to a more descriptive than normative meaning given to climate governance in discursive strategies at the city level, one which has implications for the expectations regarding the city's leadership in sustainability transitions.

The critical discourse analysis reveals contrasts between private and public discourses, as well as between non-event and event-oriented discourses. The contexts have also different effects on the discursive strategies. The results have also shown that climate governance discourses respond to contexts and communications strategies both for public and private actors, rather than to a debate about the global leadership of cities. Aside from the mayors' discourses, the debate on the role of the city in sustainability transitions has not been found to be central in the texts analysed.

The discourse adapted to the local event describes different approaches to climate governance, without necessarily generating a debate about how cities take the lead and what limitations, if any, they might encounter. Discourse can sometimes lead to the provision of services and practical information about mobility, while on other occasions it can lead to deliberations about sustainable mobility models. But one shared feature is how the discourses align with the interests of certain actors rather than with the normative debate about roles in transitions towards sustainability. This normative debate is revealed only in the mayors' discourses, but their individual voices do not seem to represent the discourse as a whole.

This would suggest that discourses around the role of cities and their leadership in climate governance should engage in debates on how they can actually take the lead with their actions. Some factors that might be limiting this debate are highlighted, such as the politicisation of environmental communications in the public sphere and the current self-regulated corporate social responsibility framework in the corporate sphere, both of which could be forging a scenario that conditions the impact made by discourse on climate governance. For a start, aside from the mayors' individual speeches, public and private discourses are not constructed in a way that enhances the meaning of the city's leadership. This could indicate that the foundations for effective urban climate governance are either not yet established or not yet fully communicated.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. Kenney, Jim (@PhillyMayor). Twitter, 10:36 p.m., 1 June 2017. https://twitter.com/phillymayor/status/870378613262217216?

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