

## **UC Irvine**

### **ICLEI - International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives**

#### **Title**

Fighting city hall to become global

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/367065m2>

#### **Journal**

World Traders, 2

#### **ISSN**

1054-8637

#### **Author**

Swain, Will

#### **Publication Date**

1989-06-01

#### **Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

# WORLD TRADERS



**Jeb Brugmann**

*Local cities should be international outpost, not local backwater.*

## Fighting city hall to become global

Cambridge, Massachusetts. Like a lot of folks, Jeb Brugmann wants city officials out of city hall. Unlike most, he'd like to see them visiting foreign governments, setting up trade agreements, sister city projects and cultural exchange programs.

"Over a thousand U.S. cities are deeply involved in world affairs issues," Brugmann says. And while some of those activities—divestment from firms doing business in South Africa and the shipment of development aid to Central American villages—might seem distinctly partisan, Brugmann insists there's a payoff. "Getting city governments involved in international affairs in general can mean big dividends for both local governments and international businesses, in general."

Brugmann is field programs director for the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, an Irvine, California-based non-profit organization working to

increase grass-roots interest in global affairs. His job, he says, is to promote the notion that local officials have international responsibilities.

Brugmann's pitch is a simple one. "Setting up an international trade agreement between a city in the US and a city in, say, Japan or Korea or Mexico, can mean jobs, increased tax revenues and a more vibrant local economy," he tells city officials around the country. "That makes international trade a local issue."

The role of local officials, Brugmann claims, can be critical to the success of local business forays into the international marketplace. "There are many countries where official connections—between mayors and city council members—can be a great asset in cutting a deal with local firms or in gaining entry to local markets. Sometimes business people don't understand that."

Neither do some local government officials. "There are still a lot of shy mayors out there, the kind who are afraid they'll get called up on the carpet for excessive travel."

But Brugmann has a mes-

sage for them too. "Everything a mayor does to build the international reputation of his or her city can bring concrete payoffs in terms of trade.

"The bottom line," Brugmann concludes, "is that local officials should do whatever they can to demonstrate to the world that their city is an international outpost, not a local backwater."

There are plenty of mayors who've taken that message to heart. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley hosted the Japan-America conference of Mayors this spring, and recently concluded an agreement with the Export-Import Bank to make his city a regional outlet for low-interest loans to international companies. Seattle, Washington Mayor Charles Royer established an Office of International Affairs that guides local firms through the rough waters of international commerce and nearby Portland, Oregon Mayor Bud Clark claims that his city is "at the center of the world, midway between Tokyo and London and midway between Shanghai and Rome." An ideal spot, *Newsweek* magazine noted re-

cently, for "an eastern outpost of the Pacific Rim."

Portland is a fine example, Brugmann says, of city officials leading local businesses to international success.

Under Clark's leadership—and with

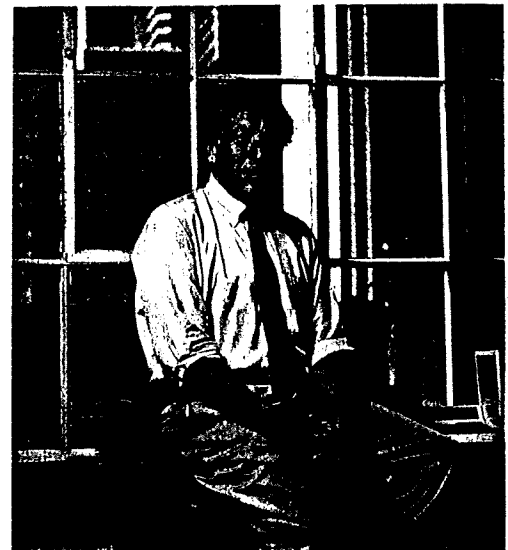
By Will Swaim

guidance from sophisticated members of the city commission and from Portland-based international business firms—Portland has become an international city. "To me, we've got a new ball game," Mayor Clark says, "we've got a global ball game, and we have to learn the new rules and how to make it work."

One of the new rules, Brugmann says, is "Work with city hall. We've studied all the success stories. Business people who don't take the opportunity to work with local government are losing out on one of the big bargains in world trade. Assistance from city hall is usually free and can mean the difference between success and failure in international trade."

## Smashing Soviet business myths

San Francisco. Their shoes are no good and their cars still have a few bugs. But, when it comes to hydroelectric equipment, says Alvin Duskin, the



**Alvin Duskin**

*Firm given unprecedented freedoms by Soviets.*

KENNETH MARTIN

JAY O'NEIL