【研究ノート】

City Diplomacy:
Exploring Themes in the Scholarly Literature

CLAUSEN Daniel ，　MEYER Christophe ，　CULLIS Stephen

都市外交
－学術文献のテーマを探る－

クラウゼン ダニエル・メーヤー クリストフ・カリス スティーブン

Abstract

　国際情勢の中で都市はどのような役割を担っているのだろうか。国際関係の分野では、近年、都市外交というトピックへの関心が高まっている。最近の研究では、国際関係における市長や市職員の役割、都市ネットワークの拡大、都市の魅力の重要性などが強調されている。本稿では、都市外交について、現在の研究・理論を中心に考察している。その結果、都市外交の実践は、複数のコンテクストによって大きく異なることがわかった。したがって、都市外交の研究には、現在、都市外交の最善の実践方法を開拓している実務家とパートナーシップを組み、実践的に理論を構築するグランドアップ・アプローチが有益であろう。

　　What role do cities play in global affairs? The field of International Relations has seen a growing interest in the topic of city diplomacy. Recent studies have highlighted the role of mayors and city officials in global relations, the growth of city networks, and the importance of the attractive charm of cities. This essay examines the topic of city diplomacy with a focus on current research and theory. It finds that the actual implementation of city diplomacy varies drastically by context. Thus, the study of city diplomacy would benefit from a ground-up approach that builds theory pragmatically in partnerships with the practitioners who are currently pioneering best practices.

Keywords: city diplomacy, sister cities, global cities
キーワード：都市外交、姉妹都市、グローバル都市

１．Overview of City Diplomacy

How do cities act in global affairs? Why do they choose to act? What unique

strengths do cities have relative to other actors in foreign affairs? For much of its existence, the discipline of International Relations (IR) has largely ignored these questions. Only recently have scholars become more attentive to the role of cities as diplomatic actors, leading to a new and burgeoning subfield (Van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007; Curtis, 2016; Hachigian, 2019; Amiri & Sevin, 2020; Kwak, 2020; Marchetti, 2021). Studies within this subfield have researched the expanding role of city networks in global affairs (Bouteligier, 2012; Acuto, 2013), the role of cities as global activists (Miyazaki, 2021), the attractive agency of cities as the gateways of globalization (Acuto, 2013; Curtis, 2016; Curtis & Acuto, 2018), and the leadership of individual mayors as global actors (Acuto, 2013; Beal & Pinson, 2014; Stren & Friendly, 2019; Miyazaki, 2021).

The study of city diplomacy has sometimes been included within studies of "paradiplomacy," "sub-state diplomacy," or "regional diplomacy," and on occasion has been referred to as "municipal foreign policy" or "urban diplomacy." For the sake of this article, "city diplomacy" is used as an umbrella term to mean not just international initiatives conducted by city hall officials on behalf of their city (although these actions are important), but also global initiatives that flow through the various activities of the city, its people, and as a result of its geographical location (for a similar usage of "city diplomacy," see Amiri & Sevin, 2020, p. 3). This fluid definition risks blending city diplomacy with other kinds of activities, such as citizen diplomacy (Van der Pluijm and Melissen, 2007, p. 12), but acknowledges unique sources of city agency identified by urban geographers, such as their histories, porousness, and importance within evolving systems of globalization.

This essay examines trends in the study of city diplomacy. It explores early research on the topic prior to 2013, the capacity of city halls to conduct foreign affairs, the growth of city networks, the attractive agency of cities through event hosting and cultural activities, and sister city relationships. In addition, the essay examines whether the study of small city diplomacy is desirable or feasible, and concludes with observations about how to build high-quality theory in partnership with practitioners both through discussion and action.

２．Themes of City Diplomacy Scholarship
Ａ．Early Studies of City Diplomacy (Prior to 2013)

In his groundbreaking study of city diplomacy, Michele Acuto (2013) described

cities as the "invisible gorilla" of global politics (p. 1-3): large, highly impactful, but often forgotten or overlooked by scholars with state-centric perspectives. Though Acuto's (2013) study of city diplomacy was instrumental in legitimizing the topic, it is not entirely accurate to say that cities were completely ignored prior to his study. In particular, several studies examined the involvement of US cities in hot-button issues during the 1980s, such as the nuclear free zone and anti-apartheid movements (Spiro, 1988; see also, Van der Pluijm and Melissen, 2007; Leffel, 2018). These studies of "municipal foreign policy" were instrumental in demonstrating how cities could undermine the official diplomacy of the state. In addition, a pilot study by Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) demonstrated that there was enough scholarly interest in the topic, especially when combined with the wider scholarship on non-state actors, to warrant further research. However, it is doubtful that without the contributions of Van der Pluijm and Melissen (2007) and Acuto (2013) the subfield we see today would be as well developed.

B．The Capacity of City Halls for Diplomacy

It has been known for some time that mayors and city halls have sought to make an impact on the global stage. An early study by Van der Pluijm & Melissen (2007), for example, found evidence that the capacity of city halls to engage in diplomacy varied according to such factors as city financial resources, geography, and legal standing in relation to the central government (p. 15-17). Yet, only recently have attempts been made to understand the capacity and influence of city halls in a systematic way. Survey research of 47 major cities conducted by Kosovac et al. (2020) found that many cities were part of city networks, that city officials felt that being internationally engaged benefited their cities, and that most cities had departments devoted to international affairs. However, the survey research concludes that though cities benefit from involvement in international affairs, they are often held back by budgetary constraints and a lack of training (Kosovac et al., 2020). There is also an open question as to whether workers in city offices, even those specializing in global affairs, are aware of the academic work being done on city diplomacy.

Another study took a more in-depth approach to the capacity of city halls for global affairs. Amiri (2020) conducted an intensive study of the three existing Mayor's Offices of International Affairs (MOIA) in the United States: New York, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. The author found that the three offices typically prioritized issues

of trade, but that outside of trade the focuses of these offices differed dramatically, and that even within each of the offices focus could shift quickly; thus, it is "unclear whether cities are acting ad hoc or strategically" (Amiri, 2020, p. 240). In the case of Los Angeles (Amiri, 2020, p. 244), the MOIA even prioritized local homelessness over other global responsibilities, suggesting that even when specialized offices exist for global affairs, their mandate may be tenuous. Amiri (2020) finds that "even existing MOIA may not be sustainable; their long-term integrity and legitimacy might be at stake and their fate might depend on leadership or other contextual factors" (p. 240). Amiri's (2020) study, along with the work of Kosovac et al. (2020), emphasizes the precariousness of city global engagement, at least through the official activities of their city halls.

Ｃ．The Growth of City Networks

A conspicuous aspect of city diplomacy in the 21st century has been the growth of city networks (Bouteligier, 2012; Acuto, 2013). These networks include the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (a coalition of cities founded in 2005 to fight climate change) (Acuto, 2013; Davidson et al., 2019), the World Health Organization's (WHO) Healthy Cities network (Acuto et al., 2017), Mayors for Peace (Miyazaki, 2021), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Global Covenant of Mayors, Eurocities, the Fearless Cities Network, the Strong Cities Network, Local Governments for Sustainability, and the Global Parliament of Mayors, among many other organizations (Marchetti, 2021, p. 78-81). The reasons for joining these networks are diverse and include sharing best practices and information, signaling to constituents the global importance of one's city, and expressing a collective voice, among other motivations (see Lusk and Gunkel, 2018, p. 22). Perhaps the most important motivation for joining many of these networks, in particular C40 and Mayors for Peace, is to overcome the apparent deadlocks and inaction of states on issues of vital importance to humanity (see Chan, 2016). As these city networks evolve and professionalize, their secretariats are becoming important actors on the global stage, providing a means of pooling limited resources and expertise (Lecavalier & Gordon, 2020, p. 17). However, there are a number of lingering questions regarding the effectiveness of these city networks and their role within global politics. For example, do these networks absorb more time and resources than they provide in tangible benefits? In terms of the secretariats themselves, Lecavalier & Gordon (2020) propose that future research needs to clarify

"when network secretariats serve primarily as mouthpieces for the interests of network members, funding partners, or stakeholders, and when their actions suggest an attempt to import on the network an independent set of interests" (p. 31).

D. The Attractive Agency of Cities: Event Hosting, Museums, Tourism, and More

There is a sense in which big cities cannot help but be the sites of global politics. Whether it is the pull of economic opportunity, the availability of capital or talent, or geographical aspects such as their location near harbors, cities *attract* people, events, and opportunities. We can see the influence of cities, especially big cities, in their ability to attract foreign embassies and consulates, as sites for the headquarters of major corporations and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), as the location of important museums and cultural monuments, and as a draw for foreign workers, students, and tourists (Marchetti, 2021, p. 82-84). In particular, museums have gained attention from scholars who see them as sites of attraction and soft power (Cai, 2012; Grincheva, 2020; Muscat, 2020, November 9). Big cities like Beijing, London, and Tokyo have been the locations for the Olympics and other major events such as world expos and international summits. These gatherings provide opportunities for public diplomacy and to demonstrate a city's competency and commitment to cosmopolitanism. One could argue that many of these types of agency should not be considered as "city diplomacy," since they often fall outside the scope of deliberately planned initiatives of city hall. Yet these local "pull" aspects of cities are important because they provide resources for global activity (see Lara, 2020, p. 202) and often create incentives for more active involvement by mayors and city officials. Even when they do not lead to more activist mayors or city officials, they allow cities – through citizen diplomacy, social influencers, and tourism – to make powerful global impressions.

E. Sister Cities

Another important aspect of city diplomacy is sister city relationships, also known as city twinning. Sister cities came into prominence as a way to create strong people-to-people relationships that would (at least in theory) make war less likely. Even though there had been some recorded attempts to establish formalized relationships between cities (for example, Paderborn, Germany and Le Mans, France in 836;

International Union of Local Authorities in 1913), the aftermath of World War II was a fertile ground for the development of new bridges between towns around the world. Despite political disagreement between federalists, unionists, and communists, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) was founded in 1951 to promote "the construction of a united, peaceful and democratic Europe" (Council of European Municipalities and Regions, n.d.). This led to the intensification of discussions about cooperation between municipalities and the signing of sister cities agreements across Europe in the subsequent years (starting with Troyes, France and Tournai, Belgium in 1951). On the other side of the Atlantic, the collaboration between cities grew rapidly after 1956, following an organized sister cities program at the behest of American president Dwight Eisenhower. This program would evolve into the nonprofit organization Sister Cities International (see Sister Cities International, 2006). In Japan, the first signed relationship with a foreign city was between Nagasaki and Saint Paul, United States in 1955. The agreement was originally called a "town affiliation" and is still active today.

We can think of the formalized pairings of cities as important symbolic diplomacy, signaling the desire for peace and friendship. Today, however, sister cities serve a range of functions beyond establishing friendships between countries. Sister cities promote tourism, business ties, and cultural exchanges; serve as platforms for advocacy and solidarity; create connections between geographically close cities that are separated by national borders; and help cities brand themselves as cosmopolitan and unique (Marchetti, 2021, p. 73-74; see also, Joenniemi & Jańczak, 2017). One study of United Kingdom sister city relationships found that just under half (46%) manage their sister cities "strategically," for example, by fostering regular interactions and creating platforms for businesses to interact (Acuto et al., 2016, p. 11). This same study found that larger cities tend to have more sister city connections (Acuto et al., 2016, p. 13, p. 21). However, as Toyoda (2016) found in his study of sister city relationships in the prefecture of Akita, even small and medium-sized cities can benefit from sister city relationships when they are developed in a pragmatic and sustainable way. Toyoda found that despite the limited economic benefits of sister city relationships for cities in Akita, they still benefit from these relationships because they present local people with rare opportunities to experience foreign cultures and languages (2016, p. 20).

F．A Role for the Study of Small-City Diplomacy?

At the moment, the scholarly literature on city diplomacy has been limited for the most part to big cities with conspicuous global impacts. Is there a role for the study of small-city diplomacy? A case study by Clerc (2020) examined the global relations of Turku, Finland, a city of about 190,000. Clerc's intensive case study approach found that city global relations often defy attempts to generalize about them. City global relations may include commercial promotion, cultural exchanges, city branding, networking, and other semi-diplomatic activities (Van der Pluijm & Melissen, 2007; Clerc, 2020), but attempts to theorize too broadly about these trends risk ignoring the historical contingency of city global relations (Clerc, 2020, p. 332; see also, Joenniemi & Jańczak, 2017). Clerc's finding suggests that research focused on medium-sized and small-city global relations may not produce generalizable theories. Nevertheless, survey and interview research using open-form questions may point to unique examples worthy of follow-up research. Thus, the case of Turku serves as a positive example that there is often more going on in small cities than what is apparent at first sight.

The ongoing research of the authors of this article – studies that include small-sized cities in New Mexico, U.S.A. and Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan – has come to similar conclusions. The size of the city is usually important: the larger the city, the more likely it is to support sister city relationships and perhaps even employ a few staff members in foreign relations. However, history is equally important. Small cities and counties – such as Los Alamos, New Mexico (population approximately 20,000) and Hirado, Nagasaki (population approximately 30,000) – can have a surprising amount of global activity. However, uncovering the full extent of these relations requires patience and tenacity since often these relationships are not entirely concentrated in city halls and may rely on the initiative of citizens.

G．Theorizing Cities as Actors: A Case for Eclecticism and Humility

Despite the progress that has been made recently, the task of creating generalizable theories of city diplomacy has proven difficult. Theorizing about cities has been troublesome, exacerbated by the complex and wonderful differences of cities, their relative invisibility to researchers until recently, and the different theoretical and disciplinary perspectives of authors writing about them. We believe the best approach to theorizing about cities at the moment is to be flexible, humble, and grounded in concrete examples. Such an approach would avoid grand theories that

can be generalized across many cases and instead develop "mid-range theories" (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010) that explain a smaller sample of similar cases. This approach should also attempt to provide insights for practitioners. A collaborative relationship with practitioners is essential because, without access to their experiences, we are merely left with shallow insights from afar. Thus, the best way to make progress is to build our theories from the ground up, asking first how we can be useful to the practitioners currently working at the frontiers of city diplomacy. Such an approach begins by building collaborative partnerships.

3．Conclusion – From Research to Action

In the field of IR, observing how diplomacy is actually practiced can be difficult. In many cases, scholars are barred from the policy meetings, briefings, and negotiations where sensitive information is discussed and decisions are made in real time. Only later, through memoirs and historical records, are scholars privy to these events. However, in city diplomacy, the gap between scholarly inquiry and implementation is not so wide. In many cases, city diplomacy relies heavily on the activism of citizens, including scholars, blurring the distinction between city diplomacy and citizen diplomacy. Already, as scholars and teachers, we can see the proximity of city diplomacy – for example, when we coach student volunteers acting as guides for visiting dignitaries. As the survey research by Kosovac et al. (2020) has found, one of the main deficiencies of city diplomacy as it is currently practiced is a lack of formal training for its practitioners. City diplomacy is thus a field of research where scholars can not only observe events closely, but also disseminate best practices, train practitioners, participate in events, and advocate for projects. Even in small cities there are nonetheless opportunities for scholars to teach city officials how they can become more globally involved. For this reason, there is a rare opportunity for scholars to design practical projects for global activism. This type of research – action research (Berg, 2001, p. 178-188) – not only has the potential to build understanding of city diplomacy through practical experience, but also to leverage research to make the world better in a small way.

References

Acuto, M. (2013). *Global Cities, Governance and Diplomacy*. New York City, NY:

Routledge.

Acuto, M., Morissette, M., Chan, D., & Leffel, B. (2016). *City Diplomacy and Twinning: Lessons from the UK, China and Globally*. City Leadership Initiative, Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy, University College London. UK Government Office for Science.

Acuto, M., Morissette, M., & Tsouros, A. (2017). City diplomacy: Towards more strategic networking? Learning with WHO healthy cities. *Global Policy*, 8(1), 14–22.

Amiri, S. (2020). Making US MOIA Sustainable Institutions for Conducting City Diplomacy by Protecting Their Precarious Values. In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds.) *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan. (pp. 235-251).

Amiri, S. & Sevin, E. (2020). Introduction. In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds). *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan. (pp. 1-10).

Beal, V., & Pinson, G. (2014). When mayors go global: International strategies, urban governance and leadership. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(1), 302-317.

Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (*4th edition*). Pearson.

Bouteligier, S. (2012). *Cities, Networks, and Global Environmental Governance: Spaces of Innovation, Places of Leadership*. Routledge.

Cai, Y. (2012). The art of museum diplomacy: The Singapore-France cultural collaboration in perspective. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 26, 127–144.

Chan, D. K.-h. (2016). City diplomacy and "glocal" governance: Revitalizing cosmopolitan democracy. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 29(2), 134–160.

Clerc L. (2020) Turku (Finland) as a Case Study in the City Diplomacy of Small Urban Centers, 1971–2011. In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds) *City Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan. (pp. 331-358).

Council of European Municipalities and Regions. (n.d.). *CEMR: Introducing CEMR*. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from

https://www.ccre.org/en/article/introducing_cemr

Curtis, S. (2016). Cities and global governance: State failure or a new global order?

Millennium – Journal of International Studies, 44(3), 455–477.

Curtis, S., & Acuto, M. (2018). The foreign policy of cities. *The RUSI Journal*, 163(6), 8–17.

Davidson, K., Coenen, L., & Gleeson, B. (2019). A Decade of C40: Research Insights and Agendas for City Networks. *Global Policy*, 10 (4), 697–708.

Grincheva, N. (2020). Museums as Actors of City Diplomacy: From "Hard" Assets to "Soft" Power. In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds) *City Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan. (p. 111-136).

Hachigian, N. (2019, April 16). Cities Will Determine the Future of Diplomacy. *Foreign Policy*.

Joenniemi, P., & Jańczak, J. (2017). Theorizing town twinning—Towards a global perspective. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 32(4), 423–428.

Kosovac, A., Hartley, K., Acuto, M., & Gunning, D. (2020). *Conducting City Diplomacy: A Survey of International Engagement in 47 Cities*. Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Kwak, N. (2020, April 21). Municipalism is an Important Global Movement, and its History Matters. *Diplomatic Courier*.

Lara, R. (2020). How Are Cities Inserting Themselves in the International System? In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds) In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds) *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects*. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan. (pp. 189-214).

Leffel, B. (2018). Animus of the underling: Theorizing city diplomacy in a world society. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 13(4), 502–522.

Lecavalier, E., & Gordon, D. J. (2020). Beyond Networking? The Agency of City Network Secretariats in the Realm of City Diplomacy. In: Amiri S., Sevin E. (eds) *City Diplomacy*. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan. (pp. 13-36).

Lusk, K., & Gunkel, N. (2018). *Cities Joining Ranks: Policy Networks on the Rise*. Boston University Initiative on Cities.

Marchetti, R. (2021). *City Diplomacy: From City-States to Global Cities*. University of Michigan Press.

Miyazaki, H. (2021). Hiroshima and Nagasaki as models of city diplomacy. *Sustainability Science*, 16(4), 1215-1228.

Muscat, M.M. (2020, November 9). The Art of Diplomacy: Museums and Soft Power.

e-International Relations.

Sil, R., & Katzenstein, P. (2010). Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms across Research Traditions. *Perspectives on Politics*, *8*(2), 411-431.

Sister Cities International. (2006). *Peace Through People: 50 Years of Global Citizenship*. Butler Books.

Spiro, P. J. (1988). Taking foreign policy away from the Feds. The *Washington Quarterly*, 11(1), 191-203.

Stren, R., & Friendly, A. (2019). Toronto and São Paulo: Cities and international diplomacy. *Urban Affairs Review*, 55(2), 375-404.

Toyoda, T. (2016). Shimai toshi teikei no hen'yō to tenbō. [Transformation and Prospects of Sister City Affiliation] *Kokusai kyōyō daigaku Ajia chiiki kenkyū renkei kikō kenkyū kiyō*, 2, 9 - 22.

Van der Pluijm, R., & Melissen, J. (2007). *City Diplomacy: The Expanding Role of Cities in International Politics*. The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael.'

Email Address   clausen@tc.nagasaki-gaigo.ac.jp

meyer@tc.nagasaki-gaigo.ac.jp

barnabycross@gmail.com