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Nov 04, 2016 by [Emily Schatzle](#)

MPD in Brazil: When Local Becomes Global: Diplomacy in Brazil's Concrete Jungle ^[1]

In early February, 7 USC Master of Public Diplomacy students embarked for São Paulo, Brazil. We arrived with just a day to get acclimated to the city before our meetings began on Monday. As students of diplomacy, the logical choice for a research trip to Brazil might be

Brasilia. As the capital, it hosts the country's diplomatic corps and would certainly make a worthy case study of how diplomacy works in Brazil. While traditional diplomacy will always be worth pursuing, we are not going to Brazil to study it. Rather, we are going to learn about innovations in public diplomacy: we want to understand what is different about Brazil, and what it means for public diplomacy in the rest of the world. The area that I am focusing on is city diplomacy.

One of the oldest forms of diplomacy is city diplomacy, in which city-states established bilateral relations thousands of years ago. In the post-Westphalia era, traditional diplomacy takes place between two heads of state or their representatives.

However, globalization changed diplomacy and increased the number of diplomatic actors. Non-governmental organizations and sub-national entities have their own interests and are able to operate at a level of global influence. The head of the São Paulo State Government's Office of Foreign Affairs Rodrigo Tavares says it best:

With globalization, these sub-national governments can no longer fulfill their constitutional responsibilities in education, sanitation, economic development, transportation, the environment, and other areas without interacting with the world.

In order to maximize their interests, cities are not just looking to their national government; they are looking to the world. And in the case of São Paulo, the world is looking back.

Consider this--while Brasilia hosts 100 embassies, São Paulo has over 50 consulates--the second largest consular corps in the world behind New York City. In 2013, the State of São Paulo became the first sub-national government in the Southern Hemisphere to sign a direct bilateral agreement with the United States. Last week, it became the first state in Brazil to ban animal testing. Google, Facebook, and ESPN are among the many corporations that set up strategic offices in São Paulo. These examples alone demonstrate that this city, is in fact, an important international actor.

During our trip, we will be meeting with Helena Monteiro de Oliveira, Coordinator of International Cooperation for the São Paulo State Government, and Leonardo Barchini, International Relations City Clerk for São Paulo. Gaining inside information about São Paulo's views and objectives at the global level will allow us to better understand its interactions with the international community. At the end of the day, São Paulo has much to offer Brazil and the world at large. We hope that the lessons we learn over the next week will offer a picture of the full potential this city has to offer. And as global attention turns to Brazil in the lead up to the World Cup this summer and the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016, São Paulo steps onto the global stage full of potential and challenges.

Stay tuned in to the CPD Blog for updates from São Paulo, photos of the delicious food and caipirinhas we will be enjoying, and most importantly reflections on our meetings and public diplomacy lessons.
