Planning for Global Engagement in Cities

By Joel Day

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Guest Editor
Emily Metzgar

Managing Editor
Sohaela Amiri

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For general inquiries and to request additional copies of this paper, please contact:

USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School
University of Southern California
3502 Watt Way, Suites 232-234
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0281
Tel: (213) 821-2078; Fax: (213) 821-0774
cpd@usc.edu

Building a Citywide Global Engagement Plan

Introduction

While cities are increasingly relevant global actors, both the motivations for their global engagement and their practices doing so are understudied and under-practiced. When President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the landmark Paris Climate Accords, mayors from around the U.S. made public commitments leaning into climate diplomacy, pledging their city policies on climate to meet or exceed the Paris Climate goals (Alvarez, 2017). Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti directly appealed to the United Nations (UN) Secretary General to create a process to include cities in future climate negotiations (Orange, 2019). Cities are certainly capable of advancing diplomatic agendas independent of their nation and are ready to do it. The fact that global engagement is growing for cities, yet most cities have not set a "grand strategy" for international affairs nor set aside more of their budget to formally engage in public diplomacy, means that cities may be ineffective and haphazard in their pursuits.

This article presents a hybrid practice and research note, setting the groundwork for both more precise theory and practice. The piece offers three contributions building upon prior work creating typologies of city diplomacy (Wang and Amiri, 2019; Amen, 2011) and advocating for increased subnational diplomatic connections (Pipa and Bouchet, 2021; Curtis, 2014; Kelley, 2014; Chan, 2016; Timberlake et al., 2014). First, I articulate a theoretical shift in the central motivating force behind global engagement for cities. Simply put, the underlying changes in global economics necessitate a structural understanding of city global engagement. I argue that the global political economy produces a strategic raison d'etre for city diplomacy. The

article offers a particular focus on two approaches to global engagement—two schools of governance for approaching the new global engagement challenge. I argue that local decision-makers should promote global engagement as a feature of local governance writ large, rather than as a tool of competitiveness to lure in capital and talent (Schragger, 2016). Such an approach positions city diplomacy, or global engagement, as an extension of new municipalism or new urbanism (Russell, 2019; Montgomery, 2014; Hackworth, 2013; Rolnik, 2019). This pivot to using city public diplomacy as *communicative* of city social welfare priorities, rather than *competitive* against other markets, offers a distinct alternative to standard practices.

The second section presents five practical steps for resource-constrained civic leaders who feel the need to engage internationally but are not sure where to start. For the aspiring "glocal" leader, such as a mayor or city manager, this section presents a *Who, What, When, Where, Why* introduction to establishing a global agenda. Each of these practical questions are grounded in specific challenges of modern global cities including housing security, pandemic response, public safety reforms and climate resilience. These public policy challenges center the practical advice not just on the mechanics of setting up a global engagement strategy, but they highlight the importance of doing so within the welfare approach to engagement, rather than the traditional competitiveness approach.

Third, the practice of local to global diplomacy presents new puzzles and challenges for scholars: this article's final section charts a data-driven research agenda to better understand this new process. In an effort to unify theory and practice, I articulate a data collection effort focusing on the same *Who, What, When, Where, Why* framework. Together, this article provides a joint blueprint for city

officials and scholars alike in envisioning the future of global city engagement grounded in the welfare of residents.

The Rise of City Diplomacy and the Need for Strategy

The idea of cities as players on a world stage is not new—Aristotle famously remarked that the city came into existence to *save* life, but that it exists for the *good* life. But the nature of that "good life" has markedly changed with globalization. Cities are now the canvas for a concentration of capital, nesting wealth within the built environment—as sociologist Saskia Sassen says, cities are the physical manifestations of globalization (Sassen, Winter/Spring 2005). This nesting of capital is new insofar as agglomeration of capital in cities sped up as manufacturing and production dispersed to the global periphery and cities became the marketplace for tech hubs and the financial services industry. The global agglomeration of talent, investment, tech and other nodes of capital were a tail-end of the neoliberal political economy consensus from the 1980s and 1990s, when countries promoted the mobility of both capital and labor. Cities around the world roared into vibrancy and were built around the wealth managers and "creative class," who both brought a new tax base and a cycle of new jobs, and redevelopment increased investment and amenities (Florida, 2003; Mellander et al., 2013).

The experience of cities in the 21st century is shared beyond national borders. The process of global capital infusion, the repatriation of the "creative class," gentrification, homelessness and other urban challenges became a mutual lexicon for mayors and managers as the structural foundations of city capacity and challenges became a truly global process transcending national borders and boundaries. The rise of cities, put simply, is a function of global political economy decisions that make cities like Tokyo, Los Angeles and Sydney less functionally differentiated than ever before.

The city moment in the global political economy has produced what we might call two schools of thought on how city leaders should view their global agenda. While the field of global city diplomacy has centered around cultural exchange and protocol, these are incomplete and in fact flow from broader governance choices. The nature of policy networks and political economy have fundamentally shifted cities from being sites of cultural diplomacy to their being actors on their own accord with new capacity. As actors, they can participate in global engagement to further their global competitiveness (the Competitive School) or to promote the welfare of residents principally (the Welfare School). These broader governance decisions then use protocol and exchanges to further interests.

The first school—the competition approach—serves as the default for many local leaders. It begins with the fact that cities are indisputably the basing points of the international political economy. Business agglomeration in cities provides businesses the services and amenities necessary to succeed in the market. In this formulation, cities are in a *marketplace for place*, competing against other cities for greater access to taxable capital, the lifeblood of the growing city. The competition for households, startups, established businesses, talent and the "creative class" preoccupies many an economic development department. City diplomacy and international engagement often are outgrowths of this competition: the more leaders can "tell their story" and the advantages of their city, the more likely they can recruit a new crop of capital. In this formulation, city diplomacy is a critical function of competing against others for capital. Cities and mayors regularly lead trade missions, establish foreign offices and work with foreign governments as a function of competition. This makes all the strategic sense in a world where city strength is a function of their serving as a marketplace of capital. A Competitive School-inspired global

engagement plan would emphasize a city's competitive advantages, industry centers, economic futures, knowledge economy hubs like universities and the amenities that could be taken advantage of by employers and their professional class employees.

There is no clearer example of the competitive approach than London's "London is Open" campaign, launched by London Mayor Sadiq Kahn in the wake of the UK vote to leave the EU. According to the campaign, "#LondonIsOpen is a major campaign … to show that London is united and open for business. It shows the world that London remains entrepreneurial, international and full of creativity and possibility"("London Is Open," n.d.). The strategic position of the London global engagement plan clearly is directed at recruiting new capital and talent, appealing to tourists and communicating the fact that London remains a global center of economic power.

The Competitive School provides a throughline to a city "going global," broadening the reach of a city to foreign capital through trade delegations, cultural exchange and economic boosterism, and providing for a new stream of human and real capital. This competition for the "Creative Class" in particular—emblemized in the "London is Open" campaign—produces economic engagement strategies that can bolster the resources to go abroad (Mellander et al., 2013). But the approach increasingly is met with resistance. Richard Florida, author behind the creative class import approach, now argues that growing economic inequalities of cities are tied to the very incentives cities use to lure in global talent and capital (Florida, 2003). Programs that fuel global competition and importing of capital fuel trade, cut taxes, offer industry subsidies and provide a host of other economic incentives that can function to undermine the very tax base they attempt to attract (Schragger, 2016;

Hackworth, 2013). Furthermore, the concern over the "flight of capital" tends to lock in initial tax holidays or economic incentives, resulting in long-term inability to redistribute the gains from the professional classes to poorer residents. This creates a dynamic in which cities compete against one another for rich residents and business while handicapping their own ability to address inequality and poverty locally, and inequality is supercharged by zoning, land use and economic strategies that preference importing private capital over building residential welfare services (Shatkin, 2007).

The alternative perspective—the Welfare School—maintains that while cities are physical nodes of global capital, it is incumbent on leaders to use their newly powerful position on the global stage to actually address the challenges of inequality that pervade the urban experience. In this formulation, cities are agents that both receive effects of global structure and have the capacity to change that structure. For example, author Gavin Shatkin argues that cities in the "global south" must grapple with globalization forces such as the privatization of public space and casualization of labor and that their responses to those structural political economy pressures are not only local, but global in their governance outcomes (Shatkin, 2007). When the mayor of Los Angeles demanded a presence for cities at the UN's deliberations on climate change in the wake of America's withdrawal from Paris, it wasn't a recruitment stunt. Instead, it was an assertion that cities have something to offer global governance that is unique in both perspective and capacity. The 21st century has seen a boom of city-to-city networks, in which municipalities use diplomacy to work together to solve problems, not compete against each other for businesses (Acuto, July–September 2013).

For the Welfare School, the job of a global engagement plan is to fit local residents into the global economy, not the other way around. As Sassen, Shatkin, scholar Peter Marcuse and other have argued, the function of global capital "materializing" in cities presents governance pressure that privileges private capital over public space and labor casualization over predictability (Sassen, 2001; Shatkin, 2007; Marcuse, 2017; Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2009). The challenge of city governance for these scholars then is to provide a "right to the city" to all, a governance that privileges the local explicitly over the task of economic competitiveness that goes abroad in search of bringing in new capital (Marcuse, 2009; Surborg, 2011). In this formulation, a city should build global relationships as an instrument of furthering local physical and economic security for their residents and practice inclusive growth rather than importing new businesses. This strategy would seek to connect municipal leaders on homelessness, housing, infrastructure, education and other pressing issues to their international counterparts to learn, lead and lift up solutions together to global bodies like the UN and regional bodies. The needs of residents become the raison d'etre for global engagement.

No better example of this perspective is the mayor and governing coalition in Barcelona, who have argued that a "new municipalist movement" is arising, placing the city as a global locus of power (Russell, 2019). Cities are powerful not through capital competition but by building upon their innate strengths and equipping their residents to get good jobs and have a high quality of life. Going global for a city then is about equipping themselves and furthering global conversations, norms and practices around core objectives like affordable housing (e.g., Cities for Adequate Housing Network), the struggle against hate and extremism (e.g., Strong Cities Network) and planning for climate adaptation

(e.g., C40). Going abroad is about governing as a strong global actor who can shape international agendas.

While fashioning a city's competitive advantage is a relatively straightforward plan for global engagement, the welfare approach is more complicated for city leadership. For one thing, cities have very few professionals who are concerned with diplomacy and "grand strategy" for city global governance. Global cities currently devote less than 1% of their budget to diplomatic engagement (Chicago Council on Global Affairs, n.d.). City council offices are burdened by land-use puzzles and potholes and are not incentivized to carefully examine the mission of global governance. The result is often elected leaders dismissing their potential global governance status as opulent and distracting from local priorities unless directly bringing in resources.

Five Puzzles to Guide the Planning Process

Of course, competitive and welfare perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A city could lean into both simultaneously, but doing so would require a concerted effort. The question then becomes one of prioritization in a context of resource scarcity. In a world of reduced budgets and the demands of competing around the world, engaging with over 200 city-led policy networks, how can a city effectively engage its population, tap stakeholders and leverage civil society to create a long-term strategic plan for global engagement? Instead of lurching from conference to conference or shiny popular issue with a shoestring budget, how can cities create plans for city diplomacy using local talent and resources?

International relations commissions are an important yet under-utilized tool for cities to plan their global engagement strategy. Many cities have created public policy advisory bodies that formally offer ideas to elected or appointed officials on a discrete issue or project. City boards and commissions offer a way for subject matter experts to volunteer their expertise, and if utilized property, they produce novel programs originated from the community rather than the bureaucracy (Dougherty and Easton, 2011). The challenge is that cities have, at times, stocked international commissions with travel enthusiasts and hobbyists rather than high-level stakeholders from the community or experts on global affairs. But a few have done it right. The City of Charlotte, North Carolina has created an "international cabinet" of local stakeholders to advise the city on globalizing efforts ("Equity, Mobility & Immigrant Integration," n.d.). The city of San Diego, in 2017, re-engineered their entire board to bring local organizations to the table that work on global issues in myriad ways—the World Trade Center, World Affairs Council, Diplomacy Council, members of university faculty and students, international business banking and finance executives, the Chamber of Commerce, labor federation representatives, retired foreign affairs officers and ambassadors, and leaders in the arts and culture community. The expanded board has a bevy of talent capable of tackling long-term strategic planning puzzles. Perhaps more importantly, the model presents a hub-and-spoke approach, where the advisory commission is a regular, public gathering of stakeholders in a city's global identity and outreach strategy. Together, they are able to both represent key constituencies up the ladder to elected officials and take the plans and decisions back to the community.

The first step is for a mayor, manager or city council to get serious about a formal mechanism to get this advice/vision casting. These advisory boards should view the mayor, council or departments in the city as their sole audience, crafting a plan for the city as their unit of analysis. These bodies can then engage five broad questions for planning: Why do we need to engage globally? Where is our focus? Who should do this work? What ways can we judge success? When is a reasonable timeline to launch a plan?

Why: Why Do We Need to Engage?

This puzzle returns to the foundations mentioned above: Are cities here to compete for capital or lead on a particular set of policies that serve their residents? Cities need to think through the raison d'etre for engaging in foreign affairs, lest the pull of the global political economy uncritically set the foundation of action. Indeed, since most cities have been restructured away from Keynesian urban policy to a new neo-liberal ideology that speeds gentrification and cuts social welfare spending (Hackworth, 2013, 1), the default "why" is most certainly to compete for investment. Indeed, in many cities, global engagement is subsumed as a function of economic development.

Instead of merely positioning one's city to compete in a marketplace of place, city leadership should begin the global engagement planning process by taking an inventory of threats and opportunities intrinsic to the city itself. The terms of global engagement should be introspective about the city's position and needs. An advisory or consulting group should consider the elected leadership priorities, resident concerns, vulnerabilities and areas of growth. These areas present potential nodes of connection to other cities engaged in similar arenas.

For example, the cities of San Diego, El Paso, Houston and others are positioned as major ports of entry for migrants and asylees in the United States. Home of the busiest land border in the world, San Diego's strategic needs over the coming years certainly concern the politics of their geographic boundary and serving the many migrants coming as a result of war, famine and climate change (Podesta, 2019). A thoughtful global engagement strategy would identify this as a node for global connection—a motivator for *why* the city is going abroad in search of best practices, policies or even to show the world their own solutions.

Such a foundational motivating problem set would lead U.S. border cities to connect with global cities with similar issues. For instance, the city of Barcelona introduced a program to welcome refugees: *City of Refuge* (Agustín and Jørgensen, 2019). The plan built internal capacity while also engaging in external diplomatic coordination with other cities throughout Europe. As articulated by the mayors of Barcelona, Lampedusa and Lesbos, "The lack of sensitivity shown by Europe's states goes in stark contrast to local initiatives. While governments haggle over quotas, the cities are building contingency and awareness-raising plans ... [W]e the local authorities are networking to establish agreements, such as the one between Lesbos, Lampedusa and Barcelona, under which we can share our knowledge, resources and solidarity." Barcelona established a new department, created a new budget and hired new personnel. Migrants increased their financial independence, employment and housing (Davies, 2017). Barcelona also elevated the external conversation, exchanging information, directing funding, engaging in technical assistance and coordinating relocation efforts among cities around Europe (Barcelona en Comú, Colau and Bookchin, 2019).

San Diego and Barcelona are both landscapes within a global migrant crisis, and planners for global engagement could think through how a welfare-focused strategy would wed them closer together. Such was the case in Barcelona, where the city, as a member of Solidarity Cities, worked beyond the nation-state boundary to coordinate with other members of the solidarity city network. The alternative school, emphasizing competition, would point the city's strategy to form deeper connections with the innovation sector, bio-pharmaceutical sectors and defense industry, all of which are competitive business nodes. This approach would most certainly prioritize trade delegations, job relocations and foreign direct investment (FDI) as a marker of success while diminishing the human security-focused needs at the border and resulting in pulling away from connections with Barcelona and instead toward other areas like Frankfurt or Dublin.

Where: Where Is Our Focus Centered?

After determining the motivating *why*, city leaders must choose their audience. Audience selection is critical in a politically and resource-constrained environment. It isn't just about who a city is speaking to externally, however. Audiences can be both internal and external—the purpose of a global engagement strategy should be to position it as speaking to both local priorities and global pressures and opportunities. In this way, global engagement speaks to internal audiences with a global lens and with external/global audiences with expertise and experience at the local level. The communication is both from the global to the local and from the local to the global: bi-directional.

A great example of the bi-directionality of a global engagement plan audience is in the area of climate security. The climate conversation has local "doers" working in the industry and bureaucracy; a national audience of regulators, funders and policymakers; and a transnational audience of peer cities. A smart global engagement plan will devise strategies for speaking to each of these audiences. For locals, the plan should infuse municipal practices with strategies that work in other contexts. The strategy should lift up and connect local priorities with similarly positioned cities and advocates at the national and transnational levels.

Engagement in climate change policy provides a powerful example demonstrating cities' role in creating feedback loops with relevant national-level actors by preparing climate change action plans and strategies that address local mitigation and adaptation measures (Alvarez, 2017; Bulkeley and Schroeder, 2012; Dawson, 2017). For example, C40, a global network of cities committed to bold climate action, provides a platform for cities to showcase their climate action solutions and in doing so inspires their city peers and pushes for national action. C40 networks also help cities engage with technical experts and undertake collective actions that demonstrate the power of cities working together by showcasing their achievements and underscoring what needs to be done to secure a greener, healthier and more prosperous future for all citizens.

Climate action is an area where meaningful action must take place as multiple layers of governance. Mayoral involvement in climate governance has crystallized this concept (Barber, 2017; Alvarez, 2017). But environmental issues are not alone here—many issues require multiple-audience engagement. A good global engagement plan will build in feedback loops, perhaps both formal and informal, to bring global perspectives into the everyday work of local

bureaucrats who may not necessarily "do" city diplomacy as part of their daily work. A great example of such feedback and multiple-audience structure is the City of Los Angeles' infusion of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the city's overall strategic framework (Pipa, 2021). Using SDGs to guide and inform the work of every relevant city department ensures that there is a formal connection between the development occurring in LA and in other cities around the world. SDGs present a common language around the goal and initiatives to further the vitality of residents and bridge the gap between local and global work.

Who: Who Do We Need to Do City Diplomacy?

The fact that cities are relevant on the global stage doesn't mean that they have the capacity of their own State Departments. The question of resources—and their intrinsic scarcity—remains a central concern. Large cities like New York and Los Angeles in the U.S. have paid staff led by impressive former ambassadors and professionals. Other tier-two cities may employ the part-time use of one economic development coordinator who plans trade missions. Still, others may have formal or informal advisors from universities, business association or cultural affinity groups. Other cities may resource their global engagement around a regional asset like an airport (Denver), cultural scene (Austin) or innovative changes in planning and governance (Copenhagen) The point is that those doing this work shouldn't be an accident. Even volunteer international advisory boards for the mayor need expertise and passion for a broader mission—a mission not to pursue global connections for their own sake but to serve local residents with global tools.

If city diplomacy is a whole-of-government enterprise, it should be engaged on a staffing level as such. As the saying goes: personnel is policy. Opening space for all to participate in city diplomacy (i.e., democratizing city diplomacy) allows for activists, academics and engaged parties, not just business interests or retiree travel hobbyists. A thoughtful cadre of city activists and experts in all fields of government are needed to advance a holistic vision of global engagement. For example, what would a plan for global engagement look like if crafted by social and policing justice advocates? (Day, 2020)

Advocates for policing reform could make a global engagement plan centered around responding to protest and policing reforms. Such activists might encourage mayors to pull together a global working group addressing police reform and justice to learn best practices, such as the "8 Can't Wait" campaign in the U.S. and the Japanese *kōban* policing model. American cities could learn from Tbilisi for example, which participated in a complete dismantling and rebuilding of their police force (Devlin, 2010). By structuring international engagement around the ethical questions of police restructuring, American cities may grow knowledge and capabilities around strategies for funding public services, mental health intervention teams and mentorship intervention strategies. Glasgow, for example, had one of the highest murder rates on the continent, prompting the city to adopt a public health approach to violence that hired doctors, teachers and social workers to intervene person to person (Kenyon, 2018). Our mayors and justice advocates can also learn in solidarity with activists responding to violent riots in Kinshasa, corruption in Kampala and racist stop-and-frisk practices in Paris (Chutel, 2016; Kato, 2016; Sunderland, 2020).

The fact that many U.S. police forces have engaged in diplomatic missions to receive training from police forces with disputable human rights records is a cause for concern for many. Learning tactics of crowd control, surveillance strategies and uses of force in protests from foreign law enforcement found to engage in extrajudicial killings, illegal surveillance and other dangerous uses of force on protesters is an inappropriate use of public diplomacy that should be curtailed. The pursuit of best practices around policing is an evolving conversation where city leaders have much to learn—but the question is: who is empowered to ask those questions? Who sets the agenda? Who is allowed to use global engagement to critique the very practices that cities may be using?

A city's global engagement plan should prioritize who is at the table with authority to make decisions about the direction of the city. If a city defers this key post to a World Trade Center, a Chamber of Commerce or other interest group, then the trajectory of the city will most certainly follow a competitive approach to global engagement by default. Governing from a welfare approach requires placing experts and interests from broader sectors who are directly impacted by the global nature of capital's infusion into the urban system: housing, homelessness, economic and environmental justice areas. Such a prioritization will mean that an advisory group should bring in diverse perspectives and needs while on a staffing level, a city should prioritize coalition-building and management acumen.

What: In What Ways Can We Judge Success?

Transitioning from a competition focus destabilizes predictable ways in which to judge the success of city diplomacy. Status quo indicators of success often include FDI, exports, number of startups and other such metrics as

a measurement of good global engagement. These metrics are incomplete when broadening a global engagement plan to serve the needs of residents. Two alternative evaluation pathways exist to expand from these traditional, competitive-focused metrics to instead assist city leaders monitoring outcomes of a broader welfare perspective.

First, cities should ensure that the team working on global engagement functions cross departmentally and are not siloed in economic development or cultural affairs. In the spirit of the above section on *who*, every department needs to be both communicated to and communicated about work at the transnational level. This means that a mayor or chief executive should build cross-functional teams, perhaps of deputy directors or program managers to work as an interdisciplinary task force assigned to a broad global mission (Kim, Ashley and Lambright, 2014). These operationally or bureaucracy-focused teams could then report out to external stakeholders or the mayor's lead on global affairs the ways in which they have engaged around the world.

Second, global engagement can be an objective for city action and formally treated as such with concrete tracking of programs and outcomes. While the competitive school metrics would indicate cities should track FDI and capital import, if a city is interested in elevating local residents with global engagement, then different metrics are needed. City leadership could require major decisions to receive a staff report (perhaps authored by the team above) about ways in which the city has engaged best global practices or shown leadership in conversation with peer cities. This requirement, similar to an environmental impact report or community engagement summary often brought before a city council before a vote on a big policy, ensures that councils themselves begin to think "glocally" (Chan, 2016).

These two mechanisms provide a structure for considering the challenges of a city in the context of global pressures rather than one-off policies. For instance, if we consider housing security and gentrification as the result of the financialization of real estate, as opposed to a local market issue (Rolnik, 2019; Madden and Marcuse, 2016), then the strategies employed by other global cities become extraordinarily relevant data. For global cities, the structure of capital nesting within physical spaces—real estate in particular—has resulted in a common set of challenges around scarcity producing soaring costs and spiraling homelessness (Madden and Marcuse, 2016; Moskowitz, 2018). Cities wishing to use global city diplomacy could link with other cities that share interests and challenges such as housing, stormwater, etc. This approach would inspire prioritizing city-to-city international organizations like *Cities for Adequate Housing* and lessons learned from social housing models from Vienna and Singapore or council housing in London. These models, in a global political economy-informed system, are as useful as any other data point for planners, developers and local elected officials.

When: When Can We Accomplish This?

City leaders should create a timeline for their global engagement plan. Time constraints assist in prioritizing programs, perhaps beginning with the issues currently top of mind. Health security, especially in the age of COVID-19, could be an immediate place for cities to build global ties.

Throughout the world, global cities are using local budgets to address serious gaps in national healthcare systems—in Valparaiso (Spain), the mayor and council have, for instance, set up pharmacies providing medicine at nonprofit and free medical clinics (Barcelona en Comú et al., 2019, 19). Increasingly, local governments are

providing community clinics and family health centers for their residents. Physical care in cities includes ordinances to mandate paid sick leave and parental leave. Other cities have also begun to see homeless populations as inexorably tied to the urban landscape posing threats, from mental health care to preventing communicable diseases, which must be addressed with local resources. Cities all across the world have begun using COVID-19 data to inform broader underlying vulnerabilities that fuel transmissions of all sorts, such as unsanitary and overcrowded conditions (de Kadt et al., 2020).

Thus, a post-COVID global engagement plan might begin with determining the sorts of public health holes that need to be plugged and set an immediate goal of engaging on this issue. From healthcare to rebuilding local economies and then to climate mitigation, a welfare-focused approach presents many challenges that can be addressed in sequences.

A Research Agenda for Global City Diplomacy

While a why-where-who-what-when strategy is useful for practitioners, a serious gap also remains for scholars. At best, this pivot to a robust welfare approach over a competitive approach continues a qualitative, anecdotal and inherently limited understanding of city diplomacy. While this work joins the growing chorus on the topic (Wang and Amiri, 2019; Chan, 2016; Acuto, July–September 2013, 2016), no longitudinal dataset exists examining the patterns of city diplomacy year over year. Further, no dataset or academic work rigorously attempts to understand the actors, actions, targets, motivations and outcomes of city diplomacy. In order to ascertain which tactics, strategies and actions support a welfare approach or competitive approach, scholars must be able to answer basic questions about the

nature of city diplomacy over time. Such longitudinal data would attempt to answer puzzles such as: Which cities are pursuing global engagement? What are the goals when these cities go abroad? Most crucially, how are we to judge the outcomes of diplomatic missions or the sort of global engagement plans itemized above? Do these achievements vary among cities? Future research must examine how cities have engaged the world in the context of globalization (2000−2019) to begin to answer three central puzzles that must be answered for the field to grow:

Puzzle 1: Why Are Cities Going Abroad?

A longitudinal data collection effort could help understand the puzzles around why cities are going abroad. As articulated above, the crucial choice cities must make is whether to pursue a competitive- or welfare-centered approach in their global engagement. A larger quantitative data collection effort would allow scholars to pursue the hypothesis assumed in this very paper—that cities are principally concerned with competing for capital, using city diplomacy efforts to articulate their competitive advantage to others. The sorts of actions and activities that cities engage in would, then, be trade missions, business tours and other economy-centered actions.

The welfare school's explanation posits that cities might be less concerned about competing for capital if their more progressive leadership views their job as growing from within, responding to the residents they already have. In this approach, cities are also interested in promoting normative outcomes that are beneficial for their city and global in nature. The sorts of human security-centered diplomatic choices illustrated above present examples of this school of thought in action. Global civil society might offer forums

and networks that amplify this redistribution and welfare-centric governing philosophy.

A basic longitudinal dataset of global engagements from the world's leading cities could help determine which cities are leaning into these various schools and the means with which they are doing so.

Puzzle 2: How Are Cities Engaging in Diplomacy?

Even for those cities that follow the formula itemized above, there will be a broad diversity in how cities engage with the world. The core challenge from an academic point of view is determining the sources of variation and whether those varied activities result in divergent outcomes. For instance, city diplomacy may centrally revolve around a mayor's policy preferences, and activities and audience targets will reflect that. Furthermore, how cities bring in diverse teams, volunteer commissions, employ outside stakeholders or simply retain a couple positions in economic development all are data points around the posture, tenor and strategic foundation of their global engagement.

Similarly, the actions they take are of central concern. Which events of diplomacy are they engaged in? Are bureaucrats going to conferences? Mayor-to-mayor delegations? Trade missions? Imputing a host of possible actions, or events, between dozens of cities over many years might produce traceable patterns of engagement. Conversely, such data may reveal divergences between conservative and progressive cities, or between various regional behaviors. Data may also reveal divergences between what elected officials articulate as the strategic framework of global engagement and the actual activities pursued by bureaucrats.

Puzzle 3: Are Cities Achieving Anything?

The entire point of longitudinal data is to ascertain changes over time. The biggest puzzle with increased capital capacity in modern global cities is obviously whether their increased diplomatic postures achieve anything. Do trade missions result in more capital investment informing FDI or startup relocations? Or, from a Welfare School point of view, does a global lens help produce different actions to benefit local residents? Again, these questions are answered anecdotally, but without rigorous data.

To answer this puzzle, data must track goals, commitments, deliverables and outcomes. Scholars must be able, in essence, to show the percentage of successful diplomatic engagements with tangible results. This would also help answer whether competitive actions are successful at luring in capital and how often, or whether a welfare approach changes norms and practices within a local government department. Outcomes such as criticism from detractors could also be coded to track competing interpretations of global engagement. To gauge the tone and tenor of a city's plan, one might be able to dichotomously count events of criticism versus claims of success.

The Data We Need

To answer these three puzzles, scholars need to build longitudinal data tracking the exact same data points that city leaders must consider as they stand up a global engagement plan. The data we need are about the why, where, who, what and whens of city events of global engagement. Events in this sense could be joining a network, sending a staffer to a conference, or a mayor going on a trade mission or welcoming an ambassador. Scholars can catalogue these events using local newspapers, perhaps the largest newspaper

of record locally, triangulated with the Associated Press and other open sources[1]. Such a collection effort could mirror datasets for other social events like protests and national diplomatic missions (Chenoweth and Lewis, 2013; Mesquita, 2019), producing a complete codebook and dictionary for understanding large-N dataset observations.

Scholars need data on the motivation or the "why" of an event. While an open text field could provide for the reasoning of a global city event occurrence, a more thorough strategy would create an index of active verbs that a city engages in to better describe the actions occurring. Such an index could have verbs like visit, meet, sign, attend, tour or a host of other actions with descriptors (educational, business, labor, cultural, etc.) to further identify the purpose of activity.

Data on where these events take place is crucial. Where is an event's focus centered? The targeted audience could be coded for national, subnational, cultural, economic, religious or myriad other targets. A similar list must also catalogue the "who." Who are the actors doing the event in question? Volunteers, elected officials, business owners, staff or other such codes would allow a quantitative display of the actors currently engaged, followed by what they are doing and to whom.

Outcomes, or the "what," remain the most valuable variables. These can be as simple as a dichotomous success/failure, an open text field, or a complex typology of outcomes or performance indicators. Finally, events must be coded with event dates in mind. The "when" of an event should note the duration of a global event (e.g., dates of a visit).

This quantitative agenda is not to diminish the qualitative work that must also increase on the topic for scholars to understand how municipal officials practice diplomacy and if they perform it differently than diplomats at the nation-state level. Such work would trace the rise of epistemic communities, unique to cities, and seek to understand how they operate. Qualitative case studies should tell the story of the processes and decisions leading to a public diplomacy outcome, such as the deliberations of the cities engaging in Paris Accords, despite a national policy otherwise. This will require interviews and practical engagements with practitioners in the field doing the work.

Conclusion

As part of an "urban turn" in international relations, scholars are increasingly recognizing what urbanists like Jane Jacobs argued decades ago—that power is best measured not by the aggregated nation-state but by the cities located within it (Sassen, 2001, 2002; Curtis, 2014; Jacobs, 2016). Cities are expanding their diplomatic connections while also engaging in multiple levels of governance and norm-elaboration around best practices in city-building, resulting in a form of regime and community building (Krasner, 1983; Haas, 2015; Amiri and Sevin, 2020). Micro-geographies have powerful new capacities, vaulting cities and municipalities onto the global stage, and the question becomes how prepared they are to engage.

This paper has shown that micro-greographies can have transnational impact and provides a joint blueprint for city officials and scholars alike to envision the future of global city engagement. Likewise, city diplomacy offers the inverse—transnational practices and norms can feed back into city practices and programs if the aim of global engagement is such a fostering. Whether homelessness, housing, policing

justice or pandemic response, cities can orient their global engagement plan around the challenges they share with other cities rather than simply competing for capital. This orientation requires a whole-of-government buy-in.

Practical considerations around the why-where-who-what-when elements of a global engagement plan help guide practitioners as they attempt to harness the increased capacity and responsibility that comes with growing city power. Similarly, this article provides academia a path forward to build useful large-N datasets around the same why-where-who-what-when elements. This data would help both create new knowledge about city global engagements as well as assist local practitioners with evidence for decision-making.

Ultimately, the future of city diplomacy and global engagement should "begin at home" (Haass, 2014). Cities should focus on using their growing diplomatic power and positioning to advance the interests of their residents—working to fit local residents into the global economy, not the other way around. This is the foundation of the new municipalist turn in urban planning and the essence of a welfare approach to city global engagement. This approach requires a rethinking of why cities are going abroad, a reframing of who does the work and a refocusing of markers of success.

Whether this approach renders different or better results is then the task of scholars, who must work to create a data-collection program for city diplomacy that can speak to longitudinal trends and a variable-based explanation of outcome variation. Together, both the practical and academic blueprint offered in this paper provides a foundation for new and exciting developments in the practice and theory of how cities engage in global governance.

Author's Biography

Dr. Joel Day is Research Fellow at the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy and Lecturer for the School of Global Policy and Strategy at the University of California San Diego. His current research concerns how global nonstate actors like cities, religious groups, or extremist organizations participate in, or prevent, violence. Day has conducted field work throughout settlements in the West Bank, with former civil-war combatants in Sierra Leone, and with groups countering extremism in the United States, Germany, Poland, and Denmark. This research has been supported by National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism and published in the J*ournal of Peace Research, Religion and Politics, Small Wars Journal, Foreign Policy, Perspectives on Terrorism, Review of Faith and International Affairs,* and *Journal of Strategic Security.* His research and commentary has also appeared in Al Jazeera, the Los Angeles Times, NPR, the San Diego Union Tribune, the Hill, the Boston Globe, and the Associated Press.

In addition to his academic work, Day has served as Senior Advisor for Covid19 Response and Recovery for the City of San Diego. department director, and advisor on issues of violent extremism and targeted violence, acting as the City's representative to the Strong Cities Network and other city to city diplomatic networks.

Day has held academic appointments as a Visiting Professor at the Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego, Assistant Professor of Security and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and lecturer and research fellow with the Sié Chéou-Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy at the University of Denver. He received his Ph.D. in International Affairs from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver.

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